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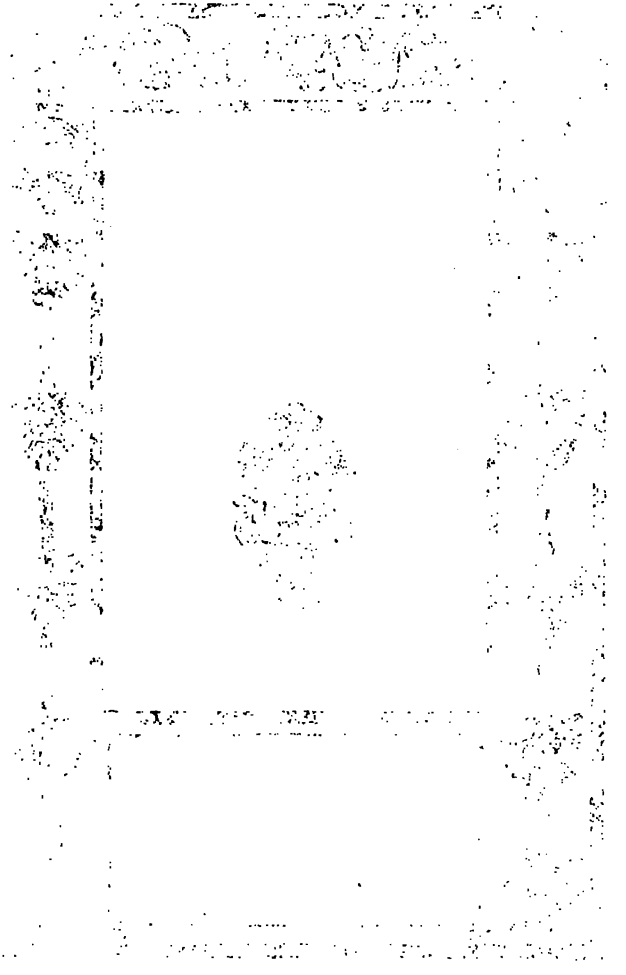
PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE, EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.
(*From the Portrait by Gainsborough.*)



# LETTERS OF LORD CHESTERFIELD

NEW YORK
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AND COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

TBH

# A SELECTION FROM

# THE LETTERS OF LORD CHESTERFIELD

## TO HIS SON AND HIS GODSON

1742 TO 1772

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

CHARLES WELSH

AUTHOR OF "A LIFE OF JOHN NEWBERY," "PUBLISHING A BOOK," ETC.

NEW YORK
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## LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS TO HIS GODSON

# INTRODUCTION

No just estimate of the character of Lord Chesterfield can be formed without some knowledge of the times in which he lived and of the set in which he moved. Nor can we pass correct judgment on the letters to his son and to his godson without taking into account the social and moral conditions — the state of civilization generally — of the England and the Europe which were the scene of their career, and the characters and circumstances of those to whom they were addressed.

The period of persecution for religious beliefs had passed away in England, and, with safety and toleration, religion had fallen asleep. "People had ceased to think so much about it, and it had become a respectable and commonplace affair, in which no one was much interested, and with which very few but the middle classes concerned themselves.

"The higher ranks, from the King downwards, were very immoral; they drank enormously, and as a rule no gentleman was ashamed of being seen intoxicated; they also swore frightfully. Great, grave, and heroic thoughts no longer occupied men's minds. The life of the upper classes in London at

this time was hardly any better than it had been under Charles II. and very different indeed from what it had been under the golden days of Queen Elizabeth. In her time there had been grace and gallantry, wit and pleasure; but these were, as we may say, the ornaments of a strong and brave character; the fair blossoming of a noble root. . . .

"During the eighteenth century there were very fine gentlemen, gay, witty, good-humoured, and charming; but those qualities were no longer the ornaments, — they were the very best part of the man; underneath were carelessness, selfishness, frivolity, and, too often, wickedness.

"The poor were in nearly as bad a state." . . . Though the population increased by leaps and bounds, "few new schools or churches were built. The people grew ignorant, irreligious, and degraded. There were no Sunday Schools and few day schools for the poor. Hardly any of them could read or write." In this century the custom of gin-drinking came in; but the enormous consumption of beer was not diminished. Benjamin Franklin tells us in his autobiography something of the beer-drinking he saw while working as a printer in London. "My fellow-pressman," he writes, "drank every day a pint of beer before breakfast, a pint with bread and cheese for breakfast, one at dinner, one again about six o'clock in the afternoon, and another after he had finished his day's work." This gin-drinking

and beer-drinking led, of course, to greater poverty, worse cruelty, and more crime. "The amusements were low and brutal, too; cock-fighting, bull-baiting, and other cruel sports were the delight of nearly all classes. There seemed a general coarseness and degradation, with but little care or feeling for anything higher."

This brief description, which is condensed from a too little known "History of England" by the late M. J. Guest, will give some idea of the world into which Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, was born in the year 1694. Before the end of his career there were some glimmerings of the light of better things and of higher ideals, but the picture of social life in England during the reigns of the Georges is at no time an altogether pleasing one.

And on the Continent of Europe the life of the nobles in the capital cities was as pleasure-loving and corrupt, — nay, even more abandoned, — while the common people were living under conditions as sordid and miserable. It was customary for the sons of the rich noblemen of England to make the Grand Tour, — that is, to visit the chief cities of Europe in company with a clergyman or scholar as a tutor, and many are the complaints we read in the memoirs and diaries of that period of the fashionable vices the young men brought back with them to graft on to the already abundant stock in the British capital.

Let us now see what part the Earl of Chesterfield came to play upon such a scene, — to what extent he was a product of that coarse and brutal age, and to what extent he rose above its influences and protested against its follies and its vices.

Deprived of his mother at an early age, neglected by his father, who seems to have had an aversion for him, he was brought up by his grandmother, the Marchioness of Halifax, a lady of culture and high connections. His character early showed one important and suggestive trait. The Earl of Galway, one of the many distinguished men who frequented his grandmother's house, advised him, *if he would become a man of mark*, to rise early. He acquired the habit, and never ceased to practise it. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he worked with diligence, acquired considerable knowledge of ancient and modern languages, and studied the great orators of all times.

After two years at Cambridge he went, in 1714, on a European tour unaccompanied by a tutor, acquired a taste for gaming at The Hague and for gallantry at Paris, and on his return became gentleman of the bedchamber to the Prince of Wales.

In 1715 young Stanhope, yet under age, entered the House of Commons, and on making his maiden speech was in danger of being heavily fined because he had spoken before attaining his majority. He fled to the Continent, whence he rendered good service

to the Government by obtaining and transmitting information about the Jacobite movement. The next year he returned to England, resumed his place in Parliament, and became Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard. On this occasion, as on others, he showed his contempt for the money-jobbing system then so prevalent.

On the death of his father, in 1726, he succeeded to the title, took his seat in the House of Lords, and the next year went to The Hague as ambassador. Here all his qualities of tact and temper, dexterity and discrimination, gained for him distinguished honours, and here too was born his son, Philip Stanhope, for whose advice and instruction the famous letters were afterwards written.

On his return to England he entered upon a stormy political career, displaying considerable independence, and attacking his old friend and patron, who had now become George II. Again his presence at The Hague was felt likely to be productive of more good than at home, and he was sent there on a mission, which proved so successful that he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland as the reward of his skill and effort.

His Irish administration, though short, was of great service and does him high honour. He was capable both in practice and theory, vigorous and tolerant, a man to be feared and a leader to be followed; he put down jobbery, established schools

and manufactures, and conciliated and kept in check the opposing factions, — a task in which few have ever succeeded.

In 1746 he became Secretary of State, but in 1748 he resigned, and thenceforward attended the House in no official capacity. He had in the meantime succeeded in winning back the esteem of the King. In 1751 he took a prominent part in establishing the change in the calendar, which advanced the date of the month eleven days, to agree with the Gregorian calendar, which all Western Europe had accepted. Though unpopular for a time, — the people sometimes running after his carriage and shouting, "Give us back our eleven days," its advantages were soon recognized.

In 1754 the famous dispute with Johnson over the dedication to his English Dictionary took place, and though in this, as in all quarrels, "there is much to be said on both sides," Johnson certainly was over-sensitive and extravagant in his language, if Chesterfield was, if one may be pardoned the phrase, politely vulgar, in calling him "an intelligent Hottentot."

The Earl was now growing deaf, and withdrew little by little from the world of politics and society, devoting himself to writing and study. His son, Philip Stanhope, died in 1768, — a child of many unrealized hopes and desires, — and Chesterfield adopted his godson as heir to his title and estates.

During the latter part of his decline, blindness was added to the loss of hearing, but his keen intellect never weakened. His memory, his wit, and his fine manners only left him with life. His last thought was for *les bienséances*. "Give Dayrolles a chair," were his last words, and his famous jest, "Tyrawley and I have been dead these two years, but we don't choose to have it known," shows how he preserved his humour and intellectual condition to the end, which came on March 24, 1773.

"It was a long life," says Lord Carnarvon. "He began it with George I.; he ended it under the great-grandson of George I. In early youth, and in the house of his grandmother, Lady Halifax, he had known Danby and Montagu, the statesmen of the Revolution; on one occasion he saw Richard Cromwell, then an old man, give evidence in a court of law before Chief Justice Holt. He lived through two quarrels with two Princes of Wales; he acted either with or against all the great public men of that day, — Bolingbroke, Walpole, Pulteney, Carteret, Pitt; he was intimate with all the greatest men of letters, with Addison, Swift, Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, Johnson; he knew Algarotti, Montesquieu, and Voltaire; he lived long enough into the reign of George III. to see him victorious in his struggle with the Whig aristocracy — long enough to witness the beginning of his fatal contest with the thirteen colonies of America; he foretold the French

Revolution when the cloud was not bigger than a man's hand; he foresaw that the kingdom of Poland was on the verge of extinction; he anticipated the fall of Papal temporalities; he was the centre of fashion in England, and was well acquainted with foreign society; he was an acknowledged chief in the world of letters, whilst in politics he played his part as a successful diplomatist and an eminent administrator. He possessed all the honours that he cared for; when he retired from public life, it was by his own choice; when again for a short time he reappeared on the public stage, it was only to render a great service to the country."

The rough and ready habit of labelling public men and women with a phrase is often the cause of much popular misconception of their character. Chesterfield is perhaps one of the most belabelled figures in the political and literary history of his time, and from the epithets that have been applied to him one would derive a curiously complex idea of his individuality. "The undisputed sovereign of wit and fashion," says one; "A wit among lords, instead of a lord among wits," says another; "A little tea-table scoundrel that tells womanish lies to make a scandal;" "The wittiest man of his time;" "A man of *veneered* manners;" "A stunted giant;" "A man without a friend;" "Immoral and profane," are a few of them. But all such are unjust, inaccurate, or only partly true, — and every one

knows that half a truth is often worse than a lie. Chesterfield was in many ways liberal and broad-minded in advance of his time, and in a venal period he was not politically corrupt,—indeed, he "hated a job." He was a wise and liberal administrator, and far-sighted in his judgments. He was in favour of the repeal of the Stamp Act, and had he lived he would not have been found on the side of George III. when he threw away the brightest jewel in England's crown, for he said in reference to England's action with America in 1765, "I would not have the mother nation become a step-mother." And as to his moral character, he certainly had higher ideals than many of his contemporaries, for we find him regretting that he had "done those things he ought not to have done, and left undone the things he ought to have done,"—an admission seldom made in the careless, godless age in which he lived.

But it is time to turn to the Letters themselves, to consider the object with which they were written, and to point out the principles which have guided the editor in making the present selection.

There is not in the history of books a more truthful and striking illustration of what constitutes the real vital element in literature than that furnished by the Letters of Lord Chesterfield. All the elaborately prepared speeches, all the careful and wily diplomatic papers, and everything else that Lord

Chesterfield wrote is buried in the literary rubbish heap of the ages, but the letters to his son are yet alive; and although they are in some places encrusted with the selfishness and cynicism of a coarse and brutal age, the world will not willingly let them die.

They were written for one eye alone; their author never dreamed of the possibility of their ever seeing the light; they were not published until after his death, and they are living to-day because it is only when the human soul bares itself without reserve that the souls of others respond. It is only when the heart speaks that heart answers to heart. So spoke and so wrote the holy men of old, — the authors of many of the great religious books of the world; so wrote and so spoke the men and women who have kindled the beacon lights of literature; so wrote Bunyan in his "Pilgrim's Progress," so wrote St. Augustine in his "Confessions," so wrote Newman in his "Apologia," so wrote Defoe in his "Robinson Crusoe," and so wrote even the selfish and cynical Lord Chesterfield in these letters. The man revealed himself in them as he was, and the revelation lives.

The letters to his son and his godson extend over a period of nearly thirty years and number some hundreds. When the widow of the son, Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope, published the former in 1774, they were at once successful, and they have been

constantly reprinted both in England and America ever since. In 1890 Lord Carnarvon, who married into the Stanhope family, published Lord Chesterfield's letters to his godson, written, of course, in his later years, and it will be noted that while they to a great extent travel over the ground covered by the letters to his son and repeat much of the same cynical, worldly-wise advice, they are infused with a higher sense of real virtue, and more constantly insist upon his duty toward his God and toward his neighbour than did those to his son. But this does not necessarily imply that Chesterfield at any time ignored the inculcation of this virtue and these duties. The absence of advice on these subjects in the letters to his son has been frequently commented upon by writers who have overlooked the fact that he had provided for the spiritual and religious education of his son by sending with him a tutor, the Rev. Walter Harte of Oxford, charged with this duty among others. "I do not speak of religion," he writes. "I am not in a position to do so; the excellent Mr. Harte will do that."

And this brings us to the consideration of some other objections which have been made to Lord Chesterfield's letters. Dr. Johnson's coarse phrase may be ignored. But we may pause for a moment to note the objections that their teachings are sometimes immoral, that undue stress is placed on good breeding and the graces, and that expediency and

personal advantage are held out as the only incentives to right living. With regard to the first, we can only point to our brief account of the times in which they were living, when things were openly done which would not be tolerated to-day, but were then considered as matters of course, and would further remark that Chesterfield never failed to reprove and condemn the errors of his age and the grosser vices of his time. But as Dr. Johnson said, "Take out the immorality, and they should be put in the hands of every young gentleman."

For the rest, it should be remembered that, as we have already said, these letters were written in the most unreserved intimacy to an individual, and were never intended for the public eye, and, of course, the characteristic defects and qualities of that individual were ever in the writer's mind when addressing his son. He had a religious instructor, therefore his father did not concern himself with his religious duties; he was naturally studious, therefore his father does not insist too much on the importance of solid learning; he was a young man of fairly clean and moral tendencies, therefore his father was not forever preaching morality. But the boy was lacking in the social graces,—he was shy, awkward, *distrait*, clumsy; therefore his father insisted on the cultivation of the arts and graces of life. Moreover, the father knew that he must excel in *l'art de plaire* if he would make his way in life and overcome the

disadvantageous circumstances of his birth. That was the one weapon which he needed with which to conquer the world, — and how the father laboured with his son to keep it sharp and bright, these letters amply testify.

Rightly interpreted, properly understood, looked at with a mind free from cant, these letters, prompted by the warmest parental affection and desire for the future welfare of his son, present a scheme of education, uniting virtue, learning, and politeness. A fair edifice in three courses, — the foundation laid in virtue, on it a solid pile of learning, and then the graces adorning it all.

And this selection has been made with the purpose of giving a view of this structure without any of the accidental blemishes due to the manners and habits of the time at which it was reared. In making it, the aim has been to present the things in the letters which are pure and lovely and of good report, eliminating every undesirable element, everything that does not make for worthy character, retaining only the permanent and basal principles, and presenting such a scheme as it is believed the author would do if he were writing to-day.

The worldly wisdom and the politely selfish creed of the author and the time in which he lived cannot, of course, be entirely removed. To attempt to do so would destroy the double value of the letters as affording interesting glimpses of social life, manners,

and customs in the eighteenth century, and as furnishing many very excellent rules and practical suggestions for the guidance of life and conduct which are applicable to all times.

In the days when Chesterfield wrote, postal facilities were uncertain; and as so constant a correspondent would rarely know when writing whether his previous letters had been received, he was led to frequent repetitions, lest nothing which he wished to say should escape. Much of this repetition we have tried to avoid. We have not retained the usual numbering of the letters, but following the definitive editions, have printed them in chronological order. The descriptive headlines to each letter were not, of course, in the originals.

CHARLES WELSH.

NEW YORK,
May, 1904.

# LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS

## THE USE OF HISTORY

*November* 20, 1739.

DEAR BOY,

As you are now reading the Roman History, I hope you do it with that care and attention which it deserves. The utility of History consists principally in the examples it gives us of the virtues and vices of those who have gone before us; upon which we ought to make the proper observations. History animates and excites us to the love and the practice of virtue; by showing us the regard and veneration that was always paid to great and virtuous men in the times in which they lived, and the praise and glory with which their names are perpetuated, and transmitted down to our times. The Roman History furnishes more examples of virtue and magnanimity, or greatness of mind, than any other. It was a common thing to see their Consuls and Dictators (who, you know, were their chief magistrates) taken from the plough, to lead their armies against their enemies; and, after victory, returning to their plough again, and passing the rest of their lives in modest retirement; a retirement more glorious, if possible,

than the victories that preceded it! Many of their greatest men died so poor, that they were buried at the expense of the public.

## THE SHAME OF IGNORANCE

MONDAY.

DEAR BOY,

I was very sorry that Mr. Maittaire did not give me such an account of you yesterday as I wished and expected. He takes so much pains to teach you, that he well deserves from you the returns of care and attention. Besides, pray consider, now that you have justly got the reputation of knowing much more than other boys of your age do, how shameful it would be for you to lose it, and to let other boys, that are now behind you, get before you. If you would but have attention, you have quickness enough to conceive, and memory enough to retain: but, without attention while you are learning, all the time you employ at your book is thrown away; and your shame will be the greater if you should be ignorant, when you had such opportunities of learning. An ignorant man is insignificant and contemptible; nobody cares for his company, and he can just be said to live, and that is all. There is a very pretty French epigram upon the death of such an ignorant, insignificant fellow; the sting of which is, that all that can be said of him is, that he was

once alive, and that he is now dead. This is the epigram, which you may get by heart:

Colas est mort de maladie,
Tu veux que j'en pleure le sort;
Que diable veux-tu que j'en die?
Colas vivoit, Colas est mort.

Take care not to deserve the name of Colas, which I shall certainly give you if you do not learn well; and then that name will get about, and everybody will call you Colas; which will be much worse than Frisky.

## ON THINKING FOR ONE'S SELF

BATH, *October* 14, 1740.

DEAR BOY,

Since I have recommended to you to think upon subjects, and to consider things in their various lights and circumstances, I am persuaded you have made such a progress, that I shall sometimes desire your opinion upon difficult points, in order to form my own. For instance, though I have in general a great veneration for the manners and customs of the ancients, yet I am in some doubt whether the Ostracism of the Athenians was either just or prudent, and should be glad to be determined by your opinion. You know very well, that the Ostracism was the method of banishing those whose distinguished virtue made them popular, and consequently (as the Athenians

thought) dangerous to the public liberty. And, if six hundred citizens of Athens gave in the name of any one Athenian written upon an oyster-shell (from whence it is called Ostracism), that man was banished Athens for ten years.

On one hand, it is certain that a free people cannot be too careful or jealous of their liberty; and it is certain, too, that the love and applause of mankind will always attend a man of eminent and distinguished virtue; and, consequently, they are more likely to give up their liberties to such a one, than to another of less merit. But then, on the other hand, it seems extraordinary to discourage virtue upon any account, since it is only by virtue that any society can flourish and be considerable. There are many more arguments, on each side of this question, which will naturally occur to you; and, when you have considered them well, I desire you will write me your opinion whether the Ostracism was a right or a wrong thing, and your reasons for being of that opinion. Let nobody help you; but give me exactly your own sentiments, and your own reasons, whatever they are.

## ON THINKING FOR ONE'S SELF

THURSDAY.

DEAR BOY,

You will seldom hear from me, without an admonition to think. All you learn, and all you can read,

will be of little use, if you do not think and reason upon it yourself. One reads, to know other people's thoughts; but if we take them upon trust, without examining and comparing them with our own, it is really living upon other people's scraps, or retailing other people's goods. To know the thoughts of others is of use, because it suggests thoughts to one's self, and helps one to form a judgment; but to repeat other people's thoughts, without considering whether they are right or wrong, is the talent only of a parrot, or at most a player.

## GOOD-BREEDING — MAUVAISE HONTE

WEDNESDAY.

DEAR BOY,

You encourage me to give you some rules of politeness and good-breeding, being persuaded that you will observe them.

Know then, that as learning, honour, and virtue are absolutely necessary to gain you the esteem and admiration of mankind, politeness and good-breeding are equally necessary to make you welcome and agreeable in conversation and common life. Great talents, such as honour, virtue, learning, and parts, are above the generality of the world, who neither possess them themselves, nor judge of them rightly in others: but all people are judges of the lesser talents, such as civil-

ity, affability and an obliging, agreeable address and manner; because they feel the good effects of them, as making society easy and pleasing.

Good-sense must, in many cases, determine good-breeding; because the same thing that would be civil at one time, and to one person, may be quite otherwise at another time, and to another person: but there are some general rules of good-breeding that hold always true, and in all cases. As, for example, it is always extremely rude to answer only Yes, or No, to anybody, without adding, Sir, my Lord, or Madam, according to the quality of the person you speak to; as, in French, you must always say, *Monsieur*, *Milord*, *Madame*, and *Mademoiselle*. I suppose you know that every married woman is, in French, *Madame*, and every unmarried one is *Mademoiselle*.

It is likewise extremely rude, not to give the proper attention and a civil answer when people speak to you; or to go away, or be doing something else, while they are speaking to you; for that convinces them that you despise them, and do not think it worth your while to hear or answer what they say. I dare say I need not tell you how rude it is, to take the best place in a room, or to seize immediately upon what you like at table, without offering first to help others, as if you considered nobody but yourself. On the contrary, you should always endeavour to procure all the conveniences you can to the people you are with. Besides being civil, which is absolutely necessary, the

perfection of good-breeding is, to be civil with ease, and in a gentlemanlike manner.

But, pray, do you remember never to be ashamed of doing what is right: you would have a great deal of reason to be ashamed, if you were not civil; but what reason can you have to be ashamed of being civil? And why not say a civil and an obliging thing as easily and as naturally as you would ask what o'clock it is? This kind of bashfulness, which is justly called by the French *mauvaise honte*, is the distinguishing character of an English booby, who is frightened out of his wits when people of fashion speak to him; and, when he is to answer them, blushes, stammers, can hardly get out what he would say, and becomes really ridiculous from a groundless fear of being laughed at: whereas, a real well-bred man would speak to all the Kings in the world with as little concern and as much ease as he would speak to you.

Remember, then, that to be civil, and to be civil with ease (which is properly called good-breeding), is the only way to be beloved and well received in company; that to be ill-bred and rude is intolerable, and the way to be kicked out of company; and that to be bashful is to be ridiculous. As I am sure you will mind and practise all this, I expect that, when you are *novennis*, you will not only be the best scholar, but the best-bred boy in England of your age. Adieu!

## A GENTEEL MANNER — AWKWARDNESS — INATTENTION

SPA, *July* 25, N.S. 1741.

DEAR BOY,

I have often told you in my former letters (and it is most certainly true) that the strictest and most scrupulous honour and virtue can alone make you esteemed and valued by mankind; that parts and learning can alone make you admired and celebrated by them; but that the possession of lesser talents was most absolutely necessary towards making you liked, beloved, and sought after in private life. Of these lesser talents, good-breeding is the principal and most necessary one, not only as it is very important in itself; but as it adds great lustre to the more solid advantages both of the heart and the mind.

I have often touched upon good-breeding to you before; so that this letter shall be upon the next necessary qualification to it, which is a genteel, easy manner and carriage, wholly free from those odd tricks, ill habits, and awkwardnesses, which even very many worthy and sensible people have in their behaviour. However trifling a genteel manner may sound, it is of very great consequence towards pleasing in private life, especially the women; which, one time or other, you will think worth pleasing; and I have known many a man, from his awkwardness, give people such a dislike of him at first, that all his merit could not get

the better of it afterwards. Whereas a genteel manner prepossesses people in your favour, bends them towards you, and makes them wish to like you.

Awkwardness can proceed but from two causes; either from not having kept good company, or from not having attended to it. As for your keeping good company, I will take care of that; do you take care to observe their ways and manners, and to form your own upon them. Attention is absolutely necessary for this, as indeed it is for everything else; and a man without attention is not fit to live in the world. When an awkward fellow first comes into a room, it is highly probable that his sword gets between his legs, and throws him down, or makes him stumble at least; when he has recovered this accident, he goes and places himself in the very place of the whole room where he should not; there he soon lets his hat fall down; and, taking it up again, throws down his cane; in recovering his cane, his hat falls a second time; so that he is a quarter of an hour before he is in order again. If he drinks tea or coffee, he certainly scalds his mouth, and lets either the cup or the saucer fall, and spills the tea or coffee in his breeches. At dinner, his awkwardness distinguishes itself particularly, as he has more to do: there he holds his knife, fork, and spoon differently from other people; eats with his knife to the great danger of his mouth, picks his teeth with his fork, and puts his spoon, which has been in his throat twenty times, into the dishes again. If he

is to carve, he can never hit the joint; but, in his vain efforts to cut through the bone, scatters the sauce in everybody's face. He generally daubs himself with soup and grease, though his napkin is commonly stuck through a button-hole, and tickles his chin. When he drinks, he infallibly coughs in his glass, and besprinkles the company. His hands are troublesome to him, when he has not something in them, and he does not know where to put them; but they are in perpetual motion between his bosom and his breeches: he does not wear his clothes, and in short does nothing, like other people. All this, I own, is not in any degree criminal; but it is highly disagreeable and ridiculous in company, and ought most carefully to be avoided by whoever desires to please.

From this account of what you should not do, you may easily judge what you should do; and a due attention to the manners of people of fashion, and who have seen the world, will make it habitual and familiar to you.

There is, likewise, an awkwardness of expression and words, most carefully to be avoided; such as false English, bad pronunciation, old sayings, and common proverbs; which are so many proofs of having kept bad and low company. For example: if, instead of saying that tastes are different, and that every man has his own peculiar one, you should let off a proverb, and say, That what is one man's meat is another man's poison; or else, Every one as they like,

as the good man said when he kissed his cow; everybody would be persuaded that you had never kept company with anybody above footmen and housemaids.

Attention will do all this; and without attention nothing is to be done: want of attention, which is really want of thought, is either folly or madness. You should not only have attention to everything, but a quickness of attention, so as to observe, at once, all the people in the room; their motions, their looks, and their words; and yet without staring at them, and seeming to be an observer. This quick and unobserved observation is of infinite advantage in life, and is to be acquired with care; and, on the contrary, what is called absence, which is a thoughtlessness, and want of attention about what is doing, makes a man so like either a fool or a madman, that, for my part, I see no real difference. A fool never has thought; a madman has lost it; and an absent man is, for the time, without it.

## COMPOSITION — FORGETFULNESS

SPA, *August* 6, 1741.

DEAR BOY,

I am glad you have begun to compose a little; it will give you an habit of thinking upon subjects, which is at least as necessary as reading them:

therefore pray send me your thoughts upon this subject:

Non sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo.[1]

It is a part of Cato's character in Lucan; who says, that Cato did not think himself born for himself only, but for all mankind. Let me know, then, whether you think that a man is born only for his own pleasure and advantage, or whether he is not obliged to contribute to the good of the society in which he lives, and of all mankind in general. This is certain, that every man receives advantages from society, which he could not have, if he were the only man in the world; therefore, is he not, in some measure, in debt to society? and is he not obliged to do for others what they do for him? You may do this in English or Latin, which you please; for it is the thinking part, and not the language, that I mind in this case.

I warned you, in my last, against those disagreeable tricks and awkwardnesses which many people contract when they are young, by the negligence of their parents, and cannot get quit of them when they are old; such as odd motions, strange postures, and ungenteel carriage. But there is likewise an awkwardness of the mind, that ought to be, and with care may be, avoided: as, for instance, to mistake or forget names; to speak of Mr. What-d'ye-call-him, or Mrs. Thingum, or How-d'ye-call-her, is excessively awkward and ordinary. To

[1] *Pharsalia*, ii. 381, "Nec sibi," etc.

call people by improper titles and appellations is so too; as my Lord, for Sir; and Sir, for my Lord. To begin a story or narration, when you are not perfect in it, and cannot go through with it, but are forced, possibly, to say, in the middle of it, "I have forgot the rest," is very unpleasant and bungling. One must be extremely exact, clear, and perspicuous in everything one says; otherwise, instead of entertaining or informing others, one only tires and puzzles them.

The voice and manner of speaking, too, are not to be neglected: some people almost shut their mouths when they speak, and mutter so, that they are not to be understood; others speak so fast, and sputter, that they are not to be understood either; some always speak as loud as if they were talking to deaf people; and others so low that one cannot hear them. All these habits are awkward and disagreeable; and are to be avoided by attention: they are the distinguishing marks of the ordinary people, who have had no care taken of their education. You cannot imagine how necessary it is to mind all these little things; for I have seen many people, with great talents, ill received, for want of having these talents too; and others well received, only from their little talents, and who had no great ones.

## POETRY AND ORATORY

PARIS, *August*, 1741.

DEAR BOY,

Since my last, I have changed considerably for the better; from the deserts of Spa to the pleasures of Paris; which, when you come here, you will be better able to enjoy than I am. It is a most magnificent town, not near so big as London, but much finer; the houses being much larger, and all built of stone. It was not only much enlarged, but embellished, by the magnificence of the last King, Louis XIV[1]; and a prodigious number of expensive buildings, and useful and charitable foundations, such as libraries, hospitals, schools, etc., will long remain the monuments of the magnificence, humanity, and good government of that Prince.

The people here are well-bred, just as I would have you be; they are not awkwardly bashful and ashamed, like the English; but easily civil, without ceremony. Though they are very gay and lively, they have attention to everything, and always mind what they are about. I hope you do so too, now, and that my highest expectations of your improvement will be more than answered, at my return; for I expect to find you construe both Greek and Latin, and likewise translate into those languages pretty readily; and also make verses in them both, with some little invention of your

[1] Louis XIV., the "Grand Monarque," reigned from 1643 to 1715.

own. All this may be, if you please; and I am persuaded you would not have me disappointed.

As to the genius of Poetry, I own, if nature had not given it you, you cannot have it; for it is a true maxim, that *Poëta nascitur, non fit:* but then, that is only as to the invention and imagination of a Poet; for everybody can, by application, make themselves masters of the mechanical part of poetry; which consists in the numbers, rhymes, measure, and harmony of verse. Ovid was born with such a genius for poetry, that he says he could not help thinking in verse, whether he would or not; and that very often he spoke verses without intending it. It is much otherwise with oratory; and the maxim there is, *Orator fit:* for it is certain that, by study and application, every man can make himself a pretty good Orator; eloquence depending upon observation and care. Every man, if he pleases, may chuse good words instead of bad ones, may speak properly instead of improperly, may be clear and perspicuous in his recitals, instead of dark and muddy; he may have grace instead of awkwardness in his motions and gestures; and, in short, may be a very agreeable, instead of a very disagreeable speaker, if he will take care and pains. And surely it is very well worth while to take a great deal of pains, to excel other men in that particular article, in which they excel beasts.

Demosthenes, the celebrated Greek Orator, thought it so absolutely necessary to speak well, that though he naturally stuttered, and had weak lungs, he resolved,

by application and care, to get the better of those disadvantages. Accordingly, he cured his stammering by putting small pebbles into his mouth; and strengthened his lungs gradually, by using himself every day to speak aloud and distinctly for a considerable time. He likewise went often to the sea-shore, in stormy weather, when the sea made most noise, and there spoke as loud as he could, in order to use himself to the noise and murmurs of the popular assemblies of the Athenians, before whom he was to speak. By such care, joined to the constant study of the best authors, he became at last the greatest Orator of his own or any other age or country, though he was born without any one natural talent for it. Adieu! Copy Demosthenes.

## KEEPING FAITH—THE DESIRE TO EXCEL

BATH, *June* 28, 1742.

DEAR BOY,

I am sure you know that breaking of your word is a folly, a dishonour, and a crime. It is a folly, because nobody will trust you afterwards; and it is both a dishonour and a crime, truth being the first duty of religion and morality: and whoever has not truth, cannot be supposed to have any one good quality, and must become the detestation of God and man. Therefore I expect, from your truth and your honour, that you will do that, which, independently of your promise, your

own interest and ambition ought to incline you to do: that is, to excel in everything you undertake.

When I was of your age, I should have been ashamed if any boy of that age had learned his book better, or played at any play better than I did; and I would not have rested a moment till I had got before him. Julius Cæsar, who had a noble thirst of glory, used to say, that he would rather be the first in a village, than the second in Rome; and he even cried when he saw the statue of Alexander the Great, with the reflection, of how much more glory Alexander had acquired at thirty years old, than he at a much more advanced age. These are the sentiments to make people considerable; and those who have them not, will pass their lives in obscurity and contempt; whereas those who endeavour to excel all, are at least sure of excelling a great many. The sure way to excel in anything, is only to have a close and undissipated attention while you are about it; and then you need not be half the time that otherwise you must be: for long, plodding, puzzling application, is the business of dulness; but good parts attend regularly, and take a thing immediately.

Consider, then, which you would choose; to attend diligently while you are learning, and thereby excel all other boys, get a great reputation, and have a great deal more time to play; or else not mind your book, let boys even younger than yourself get before you, be laughed at by them for a dunce, and have no time to

play at all: for I assure you, if you will not learn, you shall not play. What is the way, then, to arrive at that perfection, which you promise me to aim at? It is, *first*, to do your duty towards God and man; without which, everything else signifies nothing: *secondly*, to acquire great knowledge; without which, you will be a very contemptible man, though you may be a very honest one: and, *lastly*, to be very well-bred; without which, you will be a very disagreeable, unpleasing man, though you should be an honest and a learned one.

Remember, then, these three things, and resolve to excel in them all; for they comprehend whatever is necessary and useful for this world or the next: and, in proportion as you improve in them, you will enjoy the affection and tenderness of

Yours.

## GOOD-BREEDING

SATURDAY.

SIR,

It is good-breeding alone that can prepossess people in your favour at first sight; more time being necessary to discover greater talents. This good-breeding, you know, does not consist in low bows and formal ceremony; but in an easy, civil, and respectful behaviour. You will, therefore, take care to answer with complaisance, when you are spoken to; to place yourself at the lower end of the table, unless bid to go

higher; to drink first to the lady of the house, and next to the master; not to eat awkwardly or dirtily; not to sit when others stand; and to do all this with an air of complaisance, and not with a grave, sour look, as if you did it all unwillingly. I do not mean a silly, insipid smile, that fools have when they would be civil; but an air of sensible good-humour. I hardly know anything so difficult to attain, or so necessary to possess, as perfect good-breeding; which is equally inconsistent with a stiff formality, an impertinent forwardness, and an awkward bashfulness. A little ceremony is often necessary; a certain degree of firmness is absolutely so; and an outward modesty is extremely becoming: the knowledge of the world, and your own observations, must, and alone can, tell you the proper quantities of each.

## DANCING — WHAT IS WORTH DOING IS WORTH DOING WELL

DUBLIN CASTLE, *November* 19, 1745.

DEAR BOY,

Now that the Christmas breaking-up draws near, I have ordered Mr. Desnoyers to go to you, during that time, to teach you to dance. I desire you will particularly attend to the graceful motion of your arms; which, with the manner of putting on your hat, and giving your hand, is all that a gentleman need attend to. Dancing is in itself a very trifling, silly thing; but

it is one of those established follies to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform; and then they should be able to do it well. And, though I would not have you a dancer, yet, when you do dance, I would have you dance well, as I would have you do everything you do, well.

There is no one thing so trifling, but which (if it is to be done at all) ought to be done well. And I have often told you, that I wished you even played at pitch, and cricket, better than any boy at Westminster. For instance; dress is a very foolish thing; and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed, according to his rank and way of life; and it is so far from being a disparagement to any man's understanding, that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those whom he lives with: the difference in this case, between a man of sense and a fop, is, that the fop values himself upon his dress; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time that he knows he must not neglect it: there are a thousand foolish customs of this kind, which, not being criminal, must be complied with, and even cheerfully, by men of sense. Diogenes the Cynic was a wise man for despising them; but a fool for showing it. Be wiser than other people if you can; but do not tell them so.

## ORATORICAL METHOD

DUBLIN CASTLE, *February* 8, 1746.

SIR,

I have received a letter from Mr. Morel, containing a short, but beautiful manuscript, said to be yours; but, I confess, I can hardly believe it, because it is so very different from your common writing; and I will not suppose that you do not always write as well as you can; for to do anything ill, that one can do well, is a degree of negligence which I can never suspect you of. I always applauded your laudable ambition of excelling in everything you attempted; and therefore make no doubt but that you will, in a little time, be able to write full as well as the person (whoever he was) that wrote that manuscript, which is said to be yours. People like you have a contempt for mediocrity, and are not satisfied with escaping censure: they aim at praise, and, by desiring, seldom fail deserving and acquiring it.

You propose, I find, Demosthenes for your model; and you have chosen very well: but remember the pains he took to be what he was. He spoke near the sea, in storms, both to use himself to speak loud, and not to be disturbed by the noise and tumult of public assemblies; he put stones in his mouth, to help his elocution, which naturally was not advantageous: from which facts, I conclude, that whenever he spoke, he opened both his lips and his teeth; and that he

articulated every word and every syllable distinctly, and full loud enough to be heard the whole length of my library.

As he took so much pains for the graces of oratory only, I conclude he took still more for the more solid parts of it. I am apt to think he applied himself extremely, to the propriety, the purity, and the elegance of his language; to the distribution of the parts of his oration; to the force of his arguments; to the strength of his proofs; and to the passions, as well as the judgments, of his audience. I fancy he began with an *exordium*, to gain the good opinion and the affections of his audience; that afterwards he stated the point in question, briefly, but clearly; that he then brought his proofs, afterwards his arguments; and that he concluded with a *peroratio*, in which he recapitulated the whole succinctly, enforced the strong parts, and artfully slipped over the weak ones; and at last made his strong push at the passions of his hearers. Wherever you would persuade or prevail, address yourself to the passions; it is by them that mankind is to be taken. Cæsar bade his soldiers, at the battle of Pharsalia, aim at the faces of Pompey's men; they did so, and prevailed. I bid you strike at the passions; and if you do, you too will prevail. If you can once engage people's pride, love, pity, ambition (or whichever is their prevailing passion), on your side, you need not fear what their reason can do against you.

## INATTENTION

DUBLIN CASTLE, *March* 10, 1746.

SIR,

I most thankfully acknowledge the honour of two or three letters from you, since I troubled you with my last; and am very proud of the repeated instances you give me of your favour and protection, which I shall endeavour to deserve.

I am very glad you went to hear a trial in the Court of King's Bench, and still more so, that you made the proper animadversions upon the inattention of many of the people in the Court. As you observed very well the indecency of that inattention, I am sure you will never be guilty of anything like it yourself. There is no surer sign in the world of a little, weak mind, than inattention. Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well; and nothing can be done well without attention. It is the sure answer of a fool, when you ask him about anything that was said or done where he was present, that, "truly he did not mind it." And why did not the fool mind it? What had he else to do there, but to mind what was doing? A man of sense sees, hears, and retains everything that passes where he is. I desire I may never hear you talk of not minding, nor complain, as most fools do, of a treacherous memory.

Mind not only what people say, but how they say it; and, if you have any sagacity, you may discover

more truth by your eyes than by your ears. People can say what they will, but they cannot look just as they will; and their looks frequently discover, what their words are calculated to conceal. Observe, therefore, people's looks carefully, when they speak, not only to you, but to each other. I have often guessed, by people's faces, what they were saying, though I could not hear one word they said. The most material knowledge of all, I mean the knowledge of the world, is never to be acquired without great attention; and I know many old people, who, though they have lived long in the world, are but children still as to the knowledge of it, from their levity and inattention. Certain forms, which all people comply with, and certain arts, which all people aim at, hide, in some degree, the truth, and give a general exterior resemblance to almost everybody. Attention and sagacity must see through that veil, and discover the natural character.

You are of an age, now, to reflect, to observe and compare characters, and to arm yourself against the common arts, at least, of the world. If a man, with whom you are but barely acquainted, to whom you have made no offers, nor given any marks of friendship, makes you, on a sudden, strong professions of his, receive them with civility, but do not repay them with confidence; he certainly means to deceive you; for one man does not fall in love with another at sight. If a man uses strong protestations or oaths, to make you believe a thing, which is of itself so likely and

probable, that the bare saying of it would be sufficient, depend upon it he lies, and is highly interested in making you believe it: or else he would not take so much pains.

## GOOD AND BAD EVERYWHERE

DUBLIN CASTLE, *April* 5, 1746.

DEAR BOY,

Before it is very long, I am of opinion, that you will both think and speak more favourably of women than you do now. You seem to think, that, from Eve downwards, they have done a great deal of mischief. As for that Lady, I give her up to you; but, since her time, history will inform you, that men have done much more mischief in the world than women; and, to say the truth, I would not advise you to trust either, more than is absolutely necessary. But this I will advise you to, which is, never to attack whole bodies of any kind; for, besides that all general rules have their exceptions, you unnecessarily make yourself a great number of enemies, by attacking a *corps* collectively.

Among women, as among men, there are good as well as bad, and it may be full as many, or more, good than among men. This rule holds as to lawyers, soldiers, parsons, courtiers, citizens, etc. They are all men, subject to the same passions and sentiments, differing only in the manner, according to their several educations: and it would be as imprudent as unjust to

attack any of them by the lump. Individuals forgive sometimes; but bodies and societies never do. Many young people think it very genteel and witty to abuse the Clergy; in which they are extremely mistaken; since, in my opinion, parsons are very like men, and neither the better nor the worse for wearing a black gown. All general reflections, upon nations and societies, are the trite, threadbare jokes of those who set up for wit without having any, and so have recourse to commonplace. Judge of individuals from your own knowledge of them, and not from their sex, profession, or denomination.

Though, at my return, which, I hope, will be very soon, I shall not find your feet lengthened, I hope I shall find your head a good deal so, and then I shall not much mind your feet. In two or three months after my return, you and I shall part for some time: you must go to read men, as well as books, of all languages and nations. Observation and reflection will then be very necessary for you. We will talk this matter over fully when we meet; which, I hope, will be in the last week of this month; till when, I have the honour of being

Your most faithful servant.

## ON TRAVELLING INTELLIGENTLY

BATH, *September* 29, O.S. 1746.

DEAR BOY,

I received by the last mail your letter of the 23rd N.S. from Heidelberg; and am very well pleased to find that you inform yourself of the particulars of the several places you go through. You do mighty right to see the curiosities in those several places; such as the *Golden Bull* at Frankfort,[1] the tun at Heidelberg,[2] etc. Other travellers see them and talk of them, it is very proper to see them too; but remember, that seeing is the least material object of travelling; hearing and knowing are the essential points. Therefore pray let your inquiries be chiefly directed to the knowledge of the constitution and particular customs of the places where you either reside at, or pass through; whom they belong to, by what right and tenure, and since when; in whom the supreme authority is lodged; and by what Magistrates, and in what manner, the civil and the criminal justice is administered. It is likewise necessary to get as much acquaintance as you can, in

[1] The *Golden Bull*, so called from the Seal of Gold affixed to it, was granted by the Emperor Charles the Fourth. By this Act the right of Election to the Germanic Empire was confirmed in three spiritual and four temporal Electors, the Archbishops of Mentz, Cologne, and Treves, the King of Bohemia, the Count Palatine, the Duke of Saxony, and the Margrave of Brandenburg. (Butler's *Revolutions of the Germanic Empire*, p. 105.)

[2] This enormous tún was said to be twenty-four feet in diameter and thirty in depth. (*Voyages de Monconys*, vol. iii. p. 182.)

order to observe the characters and manners of the people; for, though human nature is in truth the same through the whole human species, yet it is so differently modified and varied, by education, habit, and different customs, that one should, upon a slight and superficial observation, almost think it different.

As I have never been in Switzerland myself, I must desire you to inform me, now and then, of the constitution of that country. As for instance: Do the thirteen Cantons, jointly and collectively, form one government, where the supreme authority is lodged; or is each Canton sovereign in itself, and under no tie or constitutional obligation of acting in common concert with the other Cantons? Can any one Canton make war or alliances with a foreign Power, without the consent of the other twelve, or at least a majority of them? Can one Canton declare war against another? If every Canton is sovereign and independent in itself, in whom is the supreme power of that Canton lodged? Is it in one man, or in a certain number of men? If in one man, what is he called? If in a number, what are they called; Senate, Council, or what? I do not suppose that you can yet know these things yourself: but a very little inquiry, of those who do, will enable you to answer me these few questions in your next.

You see, I am sure, the necessity of knowing these things thoroughly, and, consequently, the necessity of conversing much with the people of the country, who

alone can inform you rightly: whereas, most of the English who travel, converse only with each other, and consequently, know no more, when they return to England, than they did when they left it. This proceeds from a *mauvaise honte*, which makes them ashamed of going into company; and frequently too from the want of the necessary language (French) to enable them to bear their part in it.

As for the *mauvaise honte*, I hope you are above it. Your figure is like other people's; I suppose you will take care that your dress shall be so too, and to avoid any singularity. What then should you be ashamed of; and why not go into a mixed company, with as much ease, and as little concern, as you would go into your own room? Vice and ignorance are the only things I know, which one ought to be ashamed of: keep but clear of them, and you may go anywhere, without fear or concern. I have known some people, who, from feeling the pain and inconveniences of this *mauvaise honte*, have rushed into the other extreme, and turned impudent; as cowards sometimes grow desperate from the excess of danger: but this too is carefully to be avoided; there being nothing more generally shocking than impudence. The medium, between these two extremes, marks out the well-bred man; he feels himself firm and easy in all companies; is modest without being bashful, and steady without being impudent; if he is a stranger, he observes with care, the manners and ways of the people the most

esteemed at that place, and conforms to them with complaisance.

Instead of finding fault with the customs of that place, and telling the people that the English ones are a thousand times better, (as my countrymen are very apt to do,) he commends their table, their dress, their houses, and their manners, a little more, it may be, than he really thinks they deserve. But this degree of complaisance is neither criminal nor abject; and is but a small price to pay for the good-will and affection of the people you converse with. As the generality of people are weak enough to be pleased with these little things, those who refuse to please them so cheaply, are, in my mind, weaker than they.

There is a very pretty little French book, written by L'Abbé de Bellegarde,[1] entitled, *L'Art de plaire dans la Conversation;* and, though I confess that it is impossible to reduce the art of pleasing to a system, yet this book is not wholly useless; I dare say you may get it at Geneva, if not at Lausanne, and I would advise you to read it. But this principle I will lay down, That the desire of pleasing is at least half the art of doing it; the rest depends only upon the manner, which attention, observation, and frequenting good company will teach. But if you are lazy, careless, and indifferent whether you please or not, depend upon it you never will please.

[1] Jean Baptist de Bellegarde, a French Jesuit, but expelled from that order, translated *St. Chrysostom*, *Thomas à Kempis*, etc.; died 1734.

This letter is insensibly grown too long; but, as I always flatter myself that my experience may be of some use to your youth and inexperience, I throw out, as it occurs to me, and shall continue to do so, everything that I think may be of the least advantage to you in this important and decisive period of your life. God preserve you!

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A KNOWLEDGE OF MANKIND

BATH, *October* 4, O.S. 1746.

DEAR BOY,

Do not imagine that the knowledge which I so much recommend to you, is confined to books, pleasing, useful, and necessary as that knowledge is: but I comprehend in it the great knowledge of the world, still more necessary than that of books. In truth, they assist one another reciprocally; and no man will have either perfectly, who has not both. The knowledge of the world is only to be acquired in the world, and not in a closet. Books alone will never teach it you; but they will suggest many things to your observation, which might otherwise escape you; and your own observations upon mankind, when compared with those which you will find in books, will help you to fix the true point.

To know mankind well, requires full as much attention and application as to know books, and, it may

be, more sagacity and discernment. I am at this time, acquainted with many elderly people, who have all passed their whole lives in the great world, but with such levity and inattention, that they know no more of it now, than they did at fifteen. Do not flatter yourself, therefore, with the thoughts that you can acquire this knowledge in the frivolous chit-chat of idle companies; no, you must go much deeper than that. You must look into people, as well as at them. Almost all people are born with all the passions, to a certain degree; but almost every man has a prevailing one, to which the others are subordinate. Search every one for that ruling passion;[1] pry into the recesses of his heart, and observe the different workings of the same passion in different people. And, when you have found out the prevailing passion of any man, remember never to trust him where that passion is concerned.

## THE "ABSENT MAN"—CONTEMPT

BATH, *October* 9, O.S. 1746.

DEAR BOY,

What is commonly called an absent man, is commonly either a very weak, or a very affected man; but be he which he will, he is, I am sure, a very dis-

[1] Search then the ruling passion; there alone
The wild are constant, and the cunning known.
—Pope, *Moral Essays*, I. 274.

agreeable man in company. He fails in all the common offices of civility; he seems not to know those people to-day, with whom yesterday he appeared to live in intimacy. He takes no part in the general conversation; but, on the contrary, breaks into it from time to time with some start of his own, as if he waked from a dream. This (as I said before) is a sure indication; either of a mind so weak that it is not able to bear above one object at a time; or so affected, that it would be supposed to be wholly engrossed by, and directed to, some very great and important objects. Sir Isaac Newton,[1] Mr. Locke,[2] and (it may be) five or six more, since the creation of the world, may have had a right to absence, from that intense thought which the things they were investigating required. But if a young man, and a man of the world, who has no such avocations to plead, will claim and exercise that right of absence in company, his pretended right should, in my mind, be turned into an involuntary absence, by his perpetual exclusion out of company. However frivolous a company may be, still, while you are among them, do not show them, by your inattention, that you think them so; but rather take their tone, and conform in some degree to their weakness, instead of manifesting your contempt for them.

There is nothing that people bear more impatiently, or forgive less, than contempt; and an injury

[1] Born 1642, died 1727. [2] Born 1632, died 1704.

is much sooner forgotten than an insult. If, therefore, you would rather please than offend, rather be well than ill spoken of, rather be loved than hated, remember to have that constant attention about you, which flatters every man's little vanity; and the want of which, by mortifying his pride, never fails to excite his resentment, or, at least his ill-will. For instance: most people (I might say, all people) have their weaknesses; they have their aversions and their likings, to such or such things; so that if you were to laugh at a man for his aversion to a cat, or cheese, (which are common antipathies,) or, by inattention and negligence, to let them come in his way, where you could prevent it, he would, in the first case, think himself insulted, and, in the second, slighted; and would remember both. Whereas your care to procure for him what he likes, and to remove from him what he hates, shows him that he is at least an object of your attention; flatters his vanity, and makes him possibly more your friend, than a more important service would have done. With regard to women, attentions still below these are necessary, and, by the custom of the world, in some measure due, according to the laws of good-breeding.

My long and frequent letters, which I send you in great doubt of their success, put me in mind of certain papers, which you have very lately, and I formerly, sent up to kites, along the string, which we called messengers; some of them the wind used to blow

away, others were torn by the string, and but few of them got up and stuck to the kite. But I will content myself now, as I did then, if some of my present messengers do but stick to you. Adieu!

## THE WELL-BRED FRENCHMAN

LONDON, *March* 6, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

Madame St. Germain [and] Monsieur Pampigny both give so good an account of you, that I thought myself obliged, in justice both to them and to you, to let you know it. Those who deserve a good character, ought to have the satisfaction of knowing that they have it, both as a reward and as an encouragement. They write, that you are not only *décrotté*, but tolerably well-bred; and that the English crust of awkward bashfulness, shyness, and roughness, (of which, by the bye, you had your share,) is pretty well rubbed off. I am most heartily glad of it; for, as I have often told you, those lesser talents, of an engaging, insinuating manner, an easy good-breeding, a genteel behaviour and address, are of infinitely more advantage than they are generally thought to be, especially here in England. Virtue and learning, like gold, have their intrinsic value; but if they are not polished, they certainly lose a great deal of their lustre: and even polished brass will pass upon more people than rough gold.

What a number of sins does the cheerful, easy good-

breeding of the French frequently cover? Many of them want common sense, many more common learning; but, in general, they make up so much, by their manner, for those defects, that, frequently, they pass undiscovered. I have often said, and do think, that a Frenchman, who, with a fund of virtue, learning, and good sense, has the manners and good-breeding of his country, is the perfection of human nature. This perfection you may, if you please, and I hope you will, arrive at. You know what virtue is: you may have it if you will; it is in every man's power; and miserable is the man who has it not. Good sense God has given you. Learning you already possess enough of, to have, in a reasonable time, all that a man need have. With this, you are thrown out early into the world, where it will be your own fault if you do not acquire all the other accomplishments necessary to complete and adorn your character.

## TRUE PLEASURE

LONDON, *March* 27, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

Pleasure is the rock which most young people split upon; they launch out with crowded sails in quest of it, but without a compass to direct their course, or reason sufficient to steer the vessel; for want of which, pain and shame, instead of Pleasure, are the returns of their voyage. Do not think that I mean to snarl

at Pleasure, like a Stoic, or to preach against it, like a parson; no, I mean to point it out, and recommend it to you, like an Epicurean: I wish you a great deal; and my only view is to hinder you from mistaking it.

The character which most young men first aim at is, that of a Man of Pleasure; but they generally take it upon trust; and, instead of consulting their own taste and inclinations, they blindly adopt whatever those, with whom they chiefly converse, are pleased to call by the name of Pleasure; and a *Man of Pleasure*, in the vulgar acceptation of that phrase, means only a beastly drunkard, an abandoned . . ., and a profligate swearer and curser. As it may be of use to you, I am not unwilling, though at the same time ashamed, to own, that the vices of my youth proceeded much more from my silly resolution of being what I heard called a Man of Pleasure, than from my own inclinations. I always naturally hated drinking; and yet I have often drunk, with disgust at the time, attended by great sickness the next day, only because I then considered drinking as a necessary qualification for a fine gentleman, and a Man of Pleasure.

The same as to gaming. I did not want money, and consequently had no occasion to play for it; but I thought Play another necessary ingredient in the composition of a Man of Pleasure, and accordingly I plunged into it without desire, at first; sacrificed a thousand real pleasures to it; and made myself solidly uneasy by it, for thirty the best years of my life.

I was even absurd enough, for a little while, to swear, by way of adorning and completing the shining character which I affected; but this folly I soon laid aside, upon finding both the guilt and the indecency of it.

Thus seduced by fashion, and blindly adopting nominal pleasures, I lost real ones; and my fortune impaired, and my constitution shattered, are, I must confess, the just punishment of my errors.

Take warning then by them; chuse your pleasures for yourself, and do not let them be imposed upon you. Follow nature, and not fashion: weigh the present enjoyment of your pleasures against the necessary consequences of them, and then let your own common sense determine your choice.

Were I to begin the world again, with the experience which I now have of it, I would lead a life of real, not of imaginary, pleasure. I would enjoy the pleasures of the table, and of wine; but stop short of the pains inseparably annexed to an excess in either. I would not, at twenty years, be a preaching missionary of abstemiousness and sobriety; and I should let other people do as they would, without formally and sententiously rebuking them for it: but I would be most firmly resolved not to destroy my own faculties and constitution, in compliance to those who have no regard to their own. I would play to give me pleasure, but not to give me pain; that is, I would play for trifles, in mixed companies, to amuse myself, and

conform to custom: but I would take care not to venture for sums, which, if I won, I should not be the better for; but, if I lost, should be under a difficulty to pay; and, when paid, would oblige me to retrench in several other articles. Not to mention the quarrels which deep play commonly occasions.

I would pass some of my time in reading, and the rest in the company of people of sense and learning, and chiefly those above me; and I would frequent the mixed companies of men and women of fashion, which, though often frivolous, yet they unbend and refresh the mind, not uselessly, because they certainly polish and soften the manners.

I have not mentioned the pleasures of the mind (which are the solid and permanent ones), because they do not come under the head of what people commonly call pleasures, which they seem to confine to the senses. The pleasure of virtue, of charity, and of learning, is true and lasting pleasure; which I hope you will be well and long acquainted with. Adieu!

## EXTERNALS — ATTIC SALT

LONDON, *April* 3, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

If I am rightly informed, I am now writing to a fine gentleman, in a scarlet coat laced with gold, a brocade waistcoat, and all other suitable ornaments. The natural partiality of every author for his own works makes

me very glad to hear that Mr. Harte has thought this last edition of mine worth so fine a binding; and, as he has bound it in red, and gilt it upon the back, I hope he will take care that it shall be *lettered* too. A showish binding attracts the eyes, and engages the attention of everybody: but with this difference, that women, and men who are like women, mind the binding more than the book; whereas men of sense and learning immediately examine the inside, and, if they find that it does not answer the finery on the outside, they throw it by with the greater indignation and contempt. I hope that, when this edition of my works shall be opened and read, the best judges will find connection, consistency, solidity, and spirit in it. Mr. Harte may *recensere* and *emendare*, as much as he pleases; but it will be to little purpose, if you do not coöperate with him. The work will be imperfect.

I thank you for your last information, of our success in the Mediterranean;[1] and you say, very rightly, that a Secretary of State ought to be well informed. I hope, therefore, you will take care that I shall. You are near the busy scene in Italy; and I doubt not but that, by frequently looking at the map, you have all that theatre of the war very perfect in your mind.

I like your account of the salt-works; which shows

[1] Of this year and the preceding, Coxe observes, that "the British flag rode triumphant in the Mediterranean." (*Memoirs of the Pelham Administration* (1829) i. 363.) Our cruisers not only intercepted the French trading-vessels, but coöperated with the Austrian armies on shore.

that you gave some attention while you were seeing them. But, notwithstanding that, by your account, the Swiss salt is (I dare say) very good, yet I am apt to suspect that it falls a little short of the true Attic salt, in which there was a peculiar quickness and delicacy. That same Attic salt seasoned almost all Greece, except Bœotia; and a great deal of it was exported afterwards to Rome, where it was counterfeited by a composition called Urbanity, which in some time was brought to very near the perfection of the original Attic salt. The more you are powdered with these two kinds of salt, the better you will keep, and the more you will be relished.

## DO ONE THING AT A TIME

LONDON, *April* 14, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

You may remember, that I have always earnestly recommended to you to do what you are about, be that what it will; and to do nothing else at the same time. Do not imagine that I mean, by this, that you should attend to, and plod at, your book all day long; far from it: I mean that you should have your pleasures too; and that you should attend to them, for the time, as much as to your studies; and, if you do not attend equally to both, you will neither have improvement nor satisfaction from either. A man is fit for neither business nor pleasure, who either cannot, or

does not, command and direct his attention to the present object, and, in some degree, banish, for that time, all other objects from his thoughts. If at a ball, a supper, or a party of pleasure, a man were to be solving, in his own mind, a problem in Euclid, he would be a very bad companion, and make a very poor figure in that company; or if, in studying a problem in his closet, he were to think of a minuet, I am apt to believe that he would make a very poor mathematician. There is time enough for every thing in the course of the day, if you do but one thing at once; but there is not time enough in the year, if you will do two things at a time.

## MODELS FOR LETTER-WRITING

LONDON, *July* 20, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

*A propos* of letter-writing; the best models that you can form yourself upon, are Cicero, Cardinal d'Ossat, Madame Sevigné,[1] and Comte Bussy Rabutin.[2] Cicero's Epistles to Atticus, and to his familiar friends, are the best examples that you can imitate, in the friendly and the familiar style. The simplicity and clearness of Cardinal d'Ossat's letters, show how letters of busi-

[1] Mary de Rabutin, Marchioness de Sevigné, was born in 1626 and died 1696. Her letters were to her daughter the Countess de Grignan.

[2] Roger Rabutin, Comte de Bussy, was born in 1618 and died in 1693.

ness ought to be written: no affected turns, no attempt at wit, obscure or perplex his matter; which is always plainly and clearly stated, as business always should be. For gay and amusing letters, for *enjouement* and *badinage*, there are none that equal Comte Bussy's and Madame Sevigné's. They are so natural, that they seem to be the extempore conversations of two people of wit, rather than letters; which are commonly studied, though they ought not to be so. I would advise you to let that book be one of your itinerant library; it will both amuse and inform you.

## CARE OF THE PERSON A LUSTRE TO MERIT

LONDON, *July* 30, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

I must remind you, that it will be to very little purpose for you to frequent good company, if you do not conform to, and learn, their manners; if you are not attentive to please, and well-bred, with the easiness of a man of fashion. As you must attend to your manners, so you must not neglect your person; but take care to be very clean, well dressed, and genteel; to have no disagreeable attitudes, nor awkward tricks, which many people use themselves to, and then cannot leave them off. Do you take care to keep your teeth very clean, by washing them constantly every morning, and after every meal? This is very neces-

sary, both to preserve your teeth a great while, and to save you a great deal of pain. Mine have plagued me long, and are now falling out, merely for want of care when I was of your age. Do you dress well, and not too well? Do you consider your air and manner of presenting yourself, enough, and not too much? neither negligent nor stiff? All these things deserve a degree of care, a second-rate attention; they give an additional lustre to real merit. My Lord Bacon says, that a pleasing figure is a perpetual letter of recommendation. It is certainly an agreeable forerunner of merit, and smooths the way for it.

## TOLERANCE AND TRUTHFULNESS IN ALL THINGS

LONDON, *September* 21, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

Errors and mistakes, however gross, in matters of opinion, if they are sincere, are to be pitied; but not punished, nor laughed at. The blindness of the understanding is as much to be pitied, as the blindness of the eye; and there is neither jest nor guilt in a man's losing his way in either case. Charity bids us set him right, if we can, by arguments and persuasions; but Charity at the same time forbids either to punish or ridicule his misfortune. Every man's reason is, and must be, his guide; and I may as well expect, that every man should be of my size

and complexion, as that he should reason just as I do. Every man seeks for truth; but God only knows who has found it. It is, therefore, as unjust to persecute, as it is absurd to ridicule, people for those several opinions, which they cannot help entertaining upon the conviction of their reason.

It is the man who tells or who acts a lie, that is guilty, and not he who honestly and sincerely believes the lie. I really know nothing more criminal, more mean, and more ridiculous, than lying. It is the production either of malice, cowardice, or vanity; and generally misses of its aim in every one of these views; for lies are always detected, sooner or later. If I tell a malicious lie, in order to affect any man's fortune or character, I may indeed injure him for some time; but I shall be sure to be the greatest sufferer myself at last; for as soon as ever I am detected (and detected I most certainly shall be), I am blasted for the infamous attempt; and whatever is said afterwards, to the disadvantage of that person, however true, passes for calumny. If I lie, or equivocate, for it is the same thing, in order to excuse myself for something that I have said or done, and to avoid the danger or the shame that I apprehend from it, I discover, at once, my fear, as well as my falsehood; and only increase, instead of avoiding, the danger and the shame; I show myself to be the lowest and the meanest of mankind, and am sure to be always treated as such. Fear, instead of avoiding, invites danger; for concealed cow-

ards will insult known ones. If one has had the misfortune to be in the wrong, there is something noble in frankly owning it; it is the only way of atoning for it, and the only way of being forgiven. Equivocating, evading, shuffling, in order to remove a present danger or inconveniency, is something so mean, and betrays so much fear, that whoever practises them, always deserves to be, and often will be, kicked.

There is another sort of lies, inoffensive enough in themselves, but wonderfully ridiculous; I mean those lies which a mistaken vanity suggests, that defeat the very end for which they are calculated, and terminate in the humiliation and confusion of their author, who is sure to be detected. These are chiefly narrative and historical lies, all intended to do infinite honour to their author. He is always the hero of his own romances; he has been in dangers from which nobody but himself ever escaped; he has seen with his own eyes, whatever other people have heard or read of; he has had more *bonnes fortunes*, than ever he knew women; and has ridden more miles post, in one day, than ever courier went in two. He is soon discovered, and as soon becomes the object of universal contempt and ridicule.

Remember then, as long as you live, that nothing but strict truth can carry you through the world, with either your conscience or your honour unwounded. It is not only your duty, but your interest; as a proof of which, you may always observe, that the greatest fools

are the greatest liars. For my own part, I judge of every man's truth by his degree of understanding.

## THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE—CIVILITY

LONDON, *October* 2, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

By your letter of the 18th past, N.S., I find that you are a tolerable good landscape painter, and can present the several views of Switzerland to the curious. I am very glad of it, as it is a proof of some attention; but I hope you will be as good a portrait painter, which is a much more noble science. By portraits, you will easily judge, that I do not mean the outlines and the colouring of the human figure; but the inside of the heart and mind of man. This science requires more attention, observation, and penetration, than the other; as indeed it is infinitely more useful. Search, therefore, with the greatest care, into the characters of all those whom you converse with; endeavour to discover their predominant passions, their prevailing weaknesses, their vanities, their follies, and their humours; with all the right and wrong, wise and silly springs of human actions, which make such inconsistent and whimsical beings of us rational creatures.

A moderate share of penetration, with great atten-

tion, will infallibly make these necessary discoveries. This is the true knowledge of the world; and the world is a country which nobody ever yet knew by description; one must travel through it one's self to be acquainted with it. The Scholar, who in the dust of his closet talks or writes of the world, knows no more of it, than that Orator did of war, who judiciously endeavoured to instruct Hannibal in it. Courts and Camps are the only places to learn the world in. There alone all kinds of characters resort, and human nature is seen in all the various shapes and modes, which education, custom, and habit give it: whereas, in all other places, one local mode generally prevails, and produces a seeming, though not a real, sameness of character. For example, one general mode distinguishes an University, another a trading, town, a third a sea-port town, and so on; whereas at a capital, where the Prince or the Supreme Power resides, some of all these various modes are to be seen, and seen in action too, exerting their utmost skill in pursuit of their several objects.

Human nature is the same all over the world; but its operations are so varied by education and habit, that one must see it in all its dresses, in order to be intimately acquainted with it. The passion of ambition, for instance, is the same in a Courtier, a Soldier, or an Ecclesiastic; but, from their different educations and habits, they will take very different methods to gratify it.

Civility, which is a disposition to accommodate and oblige others, is essentially the same in every country; but good-breeding, as it is called, which is the manner of exerting that disposition, is different in almost every country, and merely local; and every man of sense imitates and conforms to that local good-breeding of the place which he is at. A conformity and flexibility of manners is necessary in the course of the world; that is, with regard to all things which are not wrong in themselves. The *versatile ingenium* is the most useful of all. It can turn itself instantly from one object to another, assuming the proper manner for each. It can be serious with the grave, cheerful with the gay, and trifling with the frivolous. Endeavour, by all means, to acquire this talent, for it is a very great one.

## CHOICE OF FRIENDS — GOOD COMPANY

LONDON, *October* 9, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

People of your age have, commonly, an unguarded frankness about them; which makes them the easy prey and bubbles[1] of the artful and the experienced; they look upon every knave, or fool, who tells them that he is their friend, to be really so; and pay that profession of simulated friendship, with an indiscreet and unbounded confidence, always to their loss, often to their ruin. Beware, therefore, now that you are

[1] Dupes.

coming into the world, of these proffered friendships. Receive them with great civility, but with great incredulity too; and pay them with compliments, but not with confidence. Do not let your vanity, and self-love, make you suppose that people become your friends at first sight, or even upon a short acquaintance. Real friendship is a slow grower; and never thrives, unless ingrafted upon a stock of known and reciprocal merit.

There is another kind of nominal friendship, among young people, which is warm for the time, but, by good luck, of short duration. This friendship is hastily produced, by their being accidentally thrown together, and pursuing the same course of riot and debauchery. A fine friendship, truly! and well cemented by drunkenness and lewdness. It should rather be called a conspiracy against morals and good manners, and be punished as such by the civil magistrate. However, they have the impudence, and the folly, to call this confederacy a friendship. They lend one another money, for bad purposes; they engage in quarrels, offensive and defensive, for their accomplices; they tell one another all they know, and often more too; when, of a sudden, some accident disperses them, and they think no more of each other, unless it be to betray and laugh at their imprudent confidence. Remember to make a great difference between companions and friends; for a very complaisant and agreeable companion may, and often

does, prove a very improper and a very dangerous friend.

People will, in a great degree, and not without reason, form their opinion of you, upon that which they have of your friends; and there is a Spanish proverb, which says very justly, *Tell me whom you live with, and I will tell you who you are.* One may fairly suppose, that a man, who makes a knave or a fool his friend, has something very bad to do or to conceal. But, at the same time that you carefully decline the friendship of knaves and fools, if it can be called friendship, there is no occasion to make either of them your enemies, wantonly, and unprovoked; for they are numerous bodies; and I would rather chuse a secure neutrality, than alliance, or war, with either of them. You may be a declared enemy to their vices and follies, without being marked out by them as a personal one. Their enmity is the next dangerous thing to their friendship. Have a real reserve with almost everybody, and have a seeming reserve with almost nobody; for it is very disagreeable to seem reserved, and very dangerous not to be so. Few people find the true medium; many are ridiculously mysterious and reserved upon trifles; and many imprudently communicative of all they know.

The next thing to the choice of your friends, is the choice of your company. Endeavour, as much as you can, to keep company with people above you. There

you rise, as much as you sink with people below you; for (as I have mentioned before) you are, whatever the company you keep is. Do not mistake, when I say company above you, and think that I mean with regard to their birth; that is the least consideration: but I mean with regard to their merit, and the light in which the world considers them.

There are two sorts of good company; one, which is called the *beau monde*, and consists of those people who have the lead in Courts, and in the gay part of life; the other consists of those who are distinguished by some peculiar merit, or who excel in some particular and valuable art or science. For my own part, I used to think myself in company as much above me, when I was with Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope, as if I had been with all the Princes in Europe. What I mean by low company which should by all means be avoided, is the company of those, who, absolutely insignificant and contemptible in themselves, think they are honoured by being in your company, and who flatter every vice and every folly you have, in order to engage you to converse with them. The pride of being the first of the company, is but too common; but it is very silly, and very prejudicial. Nothing in the world lets down a character more, than that wrong turn.

You may possibly ask me, whether a man has it always in his power to get into the best company? and how? I say, Yes, he has, by deserving it; provided he is but in circumstances which enable him to appear

upon the footing of a gentleman. Merit and good-breeding will make their way everywhere. Knowledge will introduce him, and good-breeding will endear him to the best companies; for, as I have often told you, politeness and good-breeding are absolutely necessary to adorn any, or all other good qualities or talents. Without them, no knowledge, no perfection whatsoever, is seen in its best light. The Scholar, without good-breeding, is a Pedant; the Philosopher, a Cynic; the Soldier, a Brute; and every man disagreeable.

## THE ART OF PLEASING — STUDY THE WEAKNESS OF OTHERS

LONDON, *October* 16, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

The art of pleasing is a very necessary one to possess; but a very difficult one to acquire. It can hardly be reduced to rules; and your own good sense and observation will teach you more of it than I can. "Do as you would be done by," is the surest method that I know of pleasing. Observe carefully what pleases you in others, and probably the same things in you will please others. If you are pleased with the complaisance and attention of others to your humours, your tastes, or your weaknesses, depend upon it, the same complaisance and attention on your part, to theirs, will equally please them. Take the tone of the

company that you are in, and do not pretend to give it; be serious, gay, or even trifling, as you find the present humour of the company: this is an attention due from every individual to the majority. Do not tell stories in company; there is nothing more tedious and disagreeable: if by chance you know a very short story, and exceedingly applicable to the present subject of conversation, tell it in as few words as possible; and even then, throw out that you do not love to tell stories; but that the shortness of it tempted you.

Of all things, banish the egotism out of your conversation, and never think of entertaining people with your own personal concerns or private affairs; though they are interesting to you, they are tedious and impertinent to everybody else: besides that, one cannot keep one's own private affairs too secret. Whatever you think your own excellencies may be, do not affectedly display them in company; nor labour, as many people do, to give that turn to the conversation, which may supply you with an opportunity of exhibiting them. If they are real, they will infallibly be discovered, without your pointing them out yourself, and with much more advantage. Never maintain an argument with heat and clamour, though you think or know yourself to be in the right; but give your opinion modestly and coolly, which is the only way to convince; and, if that does not do, try to change the conversation, by saying, with good-humour, "We shall hardly convince

one another; nor is it necessary that we should, so let us talk of something else."

Remember that there is a local propriety to be observed in all companies; and that what is extremely proper in one company, may be, and often is, highly improper in another.

The jokes, the *bon-mots*, the little adventures, which may do very well in one company, will seem flat and tedious when related in another. The particular characters, the habits, the cant of one company may give merit to a word, or a gesture, which would have none at all if divested of those accidental circumstances. Here people very commonly err; and fond of something that has entertained them in one company, and in certain circumstances, repeat it with emphasis in another, where it is either insipid, or, it may be, offensive, by being ill-timed or misplaced.

Nay, they often do it with this silly preamble, "I will tell you an excellent thing," or, "I will tell you the best thing in the world." This raises expectations, which when absolutely disappointed, make the relator of this excellent thing look, very deservedly, like a fool.

If you would particularly gain the affection and friendship of particular people, whether men or women, endeavour to find out their predominant excellency, if they have one, and their prevailing weakness, which everybody has; and do justice to the one, and something more than justice to the other. Men have

various objects in which they may excel, or at least would be thought to excel; and though they love to hear justice done to them, where they know that they excel, yet they are most and best flattered upon those points where they wish to excel, and yet are doubtful whether they do or not. As for example: Cardinal Richelieu,[1] who was undoubtedly the ablest statesman of his time, or perhaps of any other, had the idle vanity of being thought the best poet too: he envied the great Corneille[2] his reputation, and ordered a criticism to be written upon the Cid. Those, therefore, who flattered skilfully, said little to him of his abilities in state affairs, or at least but *en passant*, and as it might naturally occur. But the incense which they gave him — the smoke of which they knew would turn his head in their favour — was as a *bel esprit* and a poet. Why? — Because he was sure of one excellency, and distrustful as to the other.

You will easily discover every man's prevailing vanity by observing his favourite topic of conversation; for every man talks most of what he has most a mind to be thought to excel in. Touch him but there, and you touch him to the quick. The late Sir Robert Walpole[3] (who was certainly an able man) was little open to flattery upon that head, for he was in no doubt himself about it; but his prevailing weakness was, to be thought to have a polite and happy turn to gallantry, — of which he had undoubtedly less than any

[1] 1588–1642. [2] 1606–1684. [3] 1676–1745.

man living. It was his favourite and frequent subject of conversation, which proved to those who had any penetration that it was his prevailing weakness, and they applied to it with success.

Do not mistake me, and think that I mean to recommend to you abject and criminal flattery: no; flatter nobody's vices or crimes: on the contrary, abhor and discourage them. But there is no living in the world without a complaisant indulgence for people's weaknesses, and innocent, though ridiculous vanities. If a man has a mind to be thought wiser, and a woman handsomer, than they really are, their error is a comfortable one to themselves, and an innocent one with regard to other people; and I would rather make them my friends by indulging them in it, than my enemies by endeavouring (and that to no purpose) to undeceive them.

There are little attentions, likewise, which are infinitely engaging, and which sensibly affect that degree of pride and self-love, which is inseparable from human nature; as they are unquestionable proofs of the regard and consideration which we have for the persons to whom we pay them. As for example: to observe the little habits, the likings, the antipathies, and the tastes of those whom we would gain; and then take care to provide them with the one, and to secure them from the other; giving them genteelly to understand, that you had observed they liked such a dish or such a room; for which reason you had prepared it: or, on

the contrary, that having observed they had an aversion to such a dish, a dislike to such a person, etc., you had taken care to avoid presenting them. Such attention to such trifles flatters self-love much more than greater things, as it makes people think themselves almost the only objects of your thoughts and care.

These are some of the *arcana*, necessary for your initiation in the great society of the world. I wish I had known them better at your age; I have paid the price of three-and-fifty years for them, and shall not grudge it if you reap the advantage. Adieu!

## THE INTELLIGENT TRAVELLER — STUDY AND PLEASURE

LONDON, *October* 30, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

I am very well pleased with your *Itinerarium*, which you sent me from Ratisbon. It shows me that you observe and inquire as you go, which is the true end of travelling. Those who travel heedlessly from place to place, observing only their distance from each other, and attending only to their accommodation at the inn at night, set out fools, and will certainly return so. Those who only mind the raree-shows of the places which they go through, such as steeples, clocks, town-houses, etc., get so little by their travels, that they might as well stay at home. But those who observe,

and inquire into the situations, the strength, the weakness, the trade, the manufactures, the government and constitution of every place they go to; who frequent the best companies, and attend to their several manners and characters; those alone travel with advantage; and, as they set out wise, return wiser.

I would advise you always to get the shortest description or history of every place where you make any stay; and such a book, however imperfect, will still suggest to you matter for inquiry; upon which you may get better informations from the people of the place. For example; while you are at Leipsig, get some short account (and to be sure there are many such) of the present state of that town, with regard to its magistrates, its police, its privileges, etc., and then inform yourself more minutely upon all those heads in conversation with the most intelligent people. Do the same thing afterwards with regard to the Electorate of Saxony: you will find a short history of it in Puffendorf's *Introduction* which will give you a general idea of it, and point out to you the proper objects of a more minute inquiry. In short, be curious, attentive, inquisitive, as to everything; listlessness and indolence are always blameable, but at your age they are unpardonable. Consider how precious and how important, for all the rest of your life, are your moments for these next three or four years, and do not lose one of them. Do not think I mean

that you should study all day long; I am far from advising or desiring it: but I desire that you would be doing something or other all day long, and not neglect half hours and quarters of hours, which, at the year's end, amount to a great sum. For instance: there are many short intervals in the day, between studies and pleasures; instead of sitting idle and yawning, in those intervals take up any book though ever so trifling a one, even down to a jest-book, it is still better than doing nothing.

Nor do I call pleasures idleness, or time lost, provided they are the pleasures of a rational being; on the contrary, a certain portion of your time employed in those pleasures is very usefully employed. Such are public spectacles, assemblies of good company, cheerful suppers, and even balls: but then, these require attention, or else your time is quite lost.

There are a great many people who think themselves employed all day, and who, if they were to cast up their accounts at night, would find that they had done just nothing. They have read two or three hours mechanically, without attending to what they read, and consequently, without either retaining it or reasoning upon it. From thence they saunter into company, without taking any part in it, and without observing the characters of the persons, or the subjects of the conversation; but are either thinking of some trifle, foreign to the present purpose, or, often not thinking at all; which silly and idle suspension of thought they

would dignify with the name of *absence* and *distraction*. They go afterwards, it may be, to the play, where they gape at the company and the lights, but without minding the very thing they went to, the play.

Pray do you be as attentive to your pleasures as to your studies. In the latter, observe and reflect upon all you read; and in the former, be watchful and attentive to all that you see and hear; and never have it to say, as a thousand fools do, of things that were said and done before their faces, That truly they did not mind them, because they were thinking of something else. Why were they thinking of something else? and, if they were, why did they come here? The truth is, that the fools were thinking of nothing. Remember the *hoc age;* do what you are about, be that what it will; it is either worth doing well or not at all. Wherever you are, have (as the low vulgar expression is) your ears and your eyes about you; listen to everything that is said, and see every thing that is done. Observe the looks and countenances of those who speak, which is often a surer way of discovering the truth than from what they say; but then, keep all these observations to yourself, for your own private use, and rarely communicate them to others. Observe, without being thought an observer; for, otherwise, people will be upon their guard before you.

## THE VALUE OF TIME

LONDON, *December* 11, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

There is nothing which I more wish that you should know, and which fewer people do know, than the true use and value of Time. It is in everybody's mouth, but in few people's practice. Every fool who slatterns away his whole time in nothings, utters, however, some trite common-place sentence, of which there are millions, to prove at once the value and the fleetness of time. The sun-dials, likewise, all over Europe, have some ingenious inscription to that effect; so that nobody squanders away their time without hearing and seeing, daily, how necessary it is to employ it well, and how irrecoverable it is if lost. But all these admonitions are useless where there is not a fund of good sense and reason to suggest them, rather than receive them. By the manner in which you now tell me that you employ your time, I flatter myself that you have that fund: that is the fund which will make you rich indeed. I do not, therefore, mean to give you a critical essay upon the use and abuse of time; I will only give you some hints with regard to the use of one particular period of that long time which I hope you have before you; I mean the next two years.

Remember, then, that whatever knowledge you do not solidly lay the foundation of before you are eighteen, you will never be master of while you breathe.

Knowledge is a comfortable and necessary retreat and shelter for us in an advanced age; and if we do not plant it while young, it will give us no shade when we grow old. I neither require nor expect from you great application to books after you are once thrown out into the great world. I know it is impossible; and it may even, in some cases, be improper: this, therefore, is your time, and your only time, for unwearied and uninterrupted application. If you should sometimes think it a little laborious, consider that labour is the unavoidable fatigue of a necessary journey. The more hours a day you travel, the sooner you will be at your journey's end. The sooner you are qualified for your liberty, the sooner you shall have it; and your manumission will entirely depend upon the manner in which you employ the intermediate time. I think I offer you a very good bargain, when I promise you, upon my word, that, if you will do everything that I would have you do till you are eighteen, I will do everything that you would have me do ever afterwards.

## THE USE OF TIME

BATH, *February* 16, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

The first use that I made of my liberty was to come hither, where I arrived yesterday. My health, though not fundamentally bad, yet, for want of proper attention of late, wanted some repairs, which these waters

never fail giving it. I shall drink them a month, and return to London, there to enjoy the comforts of social life, instead of groaning under the load of business. I have given the description of the life that I propose to lead for the future in this motto, which I have put up in the frize of my library, in my new house:[1]

> Nunc veterum libris, nunc somno, et inertibus horis
> Ducere sollicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ.

I must observe to you upon this occasion, that the uninterrupted satisfaction which I expect to find in that library will be chiefly owing to my having employed some part of my life well at your age. I wish I had employed it better, and my satisfaction would now be complete; but, however, I planted, while young, that degree of knowledge which is now my refuge and my shelter. Make your plantations still more extensive; they will more than pay you for your trouble.

I do not regret the time that I passed in pleasures; they were seasonable, they were the pleasures of youth, and I enjoyed them while young. If I had not, I should probably have over-valued them now, as we are very apt to do what we do not know; but, knowing them as I do, I know their real value, and how much they are generally over-rated. Nor do I regret the time that I have passed in business, for the same reason. Those who see only the outside of it, imagine that it has hidden charms, which they pant after, and

[1] Chesterfield House in London. The inscription still remains as Lord Chesterfield placed it.

nothing but acquaintance can undeceive them. I, who have been behind the scenes, both of pleasure and business, and have seen all the springs and pullies of those decorations which astonish and dazzle the audience, retire, not only without regret, but with contentment and satisfaction.

But what I do, and ever shall, regret, is the time which, while young, I lost in mere idleness, and in doing nothing. This is the common effect of the inconsideracy of youth, against which I beg you will be most carefully upon your guard. The value of moments, when cast up, is immense, if well employed; if thrown away, their loss is irrecoverable. Every moment may be put to some use, and that with much more pleasure than if unemployed.

Do not imagine that by the employment of time I mean an uninterrupted application to serious studies. No; pleasures are, at proper times, both as necessary and as useful; they fashion and form you for the world; they teach you characters, and show you the human heart in its unguarded minutes. But then remember to make that use of them. I have known many people, from laziness of mind, go through both pleasure and business with equal inattention; neither enjoying the one, nor doing the other: thinking themselves men of pleasure, because they were mingled with those who were, and men of business, because they had business to do, though they did not do it. Whatever you do, do it to the purpose; do it thor-

oughly, not superficially. *Approfondissez;* go to the bottom of things. Anything half done, or half known, is, in my mind, neither done nor known at all. Nay, worse, for it often misleads. There is hardly any place, or any company, where you may not gain knowledge, if you please; almost everybody knows some one thing, and is glad to talk about that one thing. Seek and you will find, in this world as well as in the next. See everything, inquire into everything; and you may excuse your curiosity, and the questions you ask, (which otherwise might be thought impertinent,) by your manner of asking them; for most things depend a great deal upon the manner. As, for example, *I am afraid that I am very troublesome with my questions; but nobody can inform me so well as you;* or something of that kind.

Now that you are in a Lutheran country, go to their churches, and observe the manner of their public worship; attend to their ceremonies, and inquire the meaning and intention of every one of them; and, as you will soon understand German well enough, attend to their sermons, and observe their manner of preaching. Inform yourself of their church-government — whether it resides in the Sovereign, or in consistories and synods; whence arises the maintenance of their clergy — whether from tithes, as in England, or from voluntary contributions, or from pensions from the state. Do the same thing when you are in Roman Catholic countries; go to their churches, see all their

ceremonies, ask the meaning of them, get the terms explained to you — as, for instance, Prime, Tierce, Sexte, Nones, Matins, Angelus, High Mass, Vespers, Compline, etc. Inform yourself of their several religious orders, their founders, their rules, their vows, their habits, their revenues, etc.; but when you frequent places of public worship, as I would have you go to all the different ones you meet with, remember that, however erroneous, they are none of them objects of laughter and ridicule. Honest error is to be pitied, not ridiculed. The object of all the public worships in the world is the same; it is that great eternal Being, who created everything. The different manners of worship are by no means subjects of ridicule; each sect thinks its own the best; and I know no infallible judge, in this world, to decide which is the best. Make the same inquiries, wherever you are, concerning the revenues, the military establishment, the trade, the commerce, and the police of every country. And you would do well to keep a blank-paper book, which the Germans call an *album;* and there, instead of desiring, as they do, every fool they meet with to scribble something, write down all these things, as soon as they come to your knowledge from good authorities.

## LEARNING — PEDANTRY

BATH, *February* 22, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Every excellency, and every virtue, has its kindred vice or weakness; and if carried beyond certain bounds, sinks into the one or the other. Generosity often runs into profusion, economy into avarice, courage into rashness, caution into timidity, and so on; insomuch that, I believe, there is more judgment required for the proper conduct of our virtues, than for avoiding their opposite vices. Vice, in its true light, is so deformed, that it shocks us at first sight; and would hardly ever seduce us, if it did not, at first, wear the mask of some virtue. But virtue is, in itself, so beautiful, that it charms us at first sight; engages us more and more upon further acquaintance, and, as with other beauties, we think excess impossible, it is here that judgment is necessary, to moderate and direct the effects of an excellent cause.

I shall apply this reasoning, at present, not to any particular virtue, but to an excellency, which, for want of judgment, is often the cause of ridiculous and blameable effects; I mean, great learning — which, if not accompanied with sound judgment, frequently carries us into error, pride, and pedantry. As I hope you will possess that excellency in its utmost extent, and yet without its too common failings, the hints, which

my experience can suggest, may probably be useless to you.

Some learned men, proud of their knowledge, only speak to decide, and give judgment without appeal. The consequence of which is, that mankind, provoked by the insult and injured by the oppression, revolt; and, in order to shake off the tyranny, even call the lawful authority in question. The more you know, the modester you should be; and (by the bye) that modesty is the surest way of gratifying your vanity. Even where you are sure, seem rather doubtful; represent, but do not pronounce; and, if you would convince others, seem open to conviction yourself.

Others, to show their learning, or often from the prejudices of a school education, where they hear nothing else, are always talking of the Ancients as something more than men, and of the Moderns as something less. They are never without a classic or two in their pockets; they stick to the old good sense; they read none of the modern trash; and will show you plainly that no improvement has been made, in any one art or science, these last seventeen hundred years. I would by no means have you disown your acquaintance with the ancients, but still less would I have you brag of an exclusive intimacy with them. Speak of the moderns without contempt, and of the ancients without idolatry; judge them all by their merits, but not by their age; and, if you happen to have an

Elzevir[1] classic in your pocket, neither show it nor mention it.

Some great scholars, most absurdly, draw all their maxims, both for public and private life, from what they call parallel cases in the ancient authors; without considering that, in the first place, there never were, since the creation of the world, two cases exactly parallel; and, in the next place, that there never was a case stated, or even known, by any historian, with every one of its circumstances; which, however, ought to be known, in order to be reasoned from. Reason upon the case itself, and the several circumstances that attend it, and act accordingly; but not from the authority of ancient poets or historians. Take into your consideration, if you please, cases seemingly analogous; but take them as helps only not as guides. We are really so prejudiced by our educations, that, as the ancients deified their heroes, we deify their madmen: of which, with all due regard to antiquity, I take Leonidas and Curtius to have been two distinguished ones. And yet a solid pedant would, in a speech in Parliament relative to a tax of twopence in the pound upon some commodity or other, quote those two heroes as examples of what we ought to do and suffer for our country. I have known these absurdities carried so far by people of injudicious learning, that I

[1] The Elzevir family of printers resided at Amsterdam and Leyden. These beautiful editions were published principally between 1594 and 1680.

should not be surprised if some of them were to propose, while we are at war with the Gauls, that a number of geese should be kept in the Tower upon account of the infinite advantage which Rome received, *in a parallel case*, from a certain number of geese in the Capitol. This way of reasoning and this way of speaking will always form a poor politician, and a puerile declaimer.

There is another species of learned men, who, though less dogmatical and supercilious, are not less impertinent. These are the communicative and shining pedants, who adorn their conversation, even with women, by happy quotations of Greek and Latin; and who have contracted such a familiarity with the Greek and Roman authors, that they call them by certain names or epithets denoting intimacy. As *old* Homer; that *sly rogue* Horace; *Maro*, instead of Virgil; and *Naso*, instead of Ovid. These are often imitated by coxcombs, who have no learning at all, but who have got some names and some scraps of ancient authors by heart, which they improperly and impertinently retail in all companies, in hopes of passing for scholars. If, therefore, you would avoid the accusation of pedantry on one hand, or the suspicion of ignorance on the other, abstain from learned ostentation. Speak the language of the company that you are in; speak it purely, and unlarded with any other. Never seem wiser nor more learned than the people you are with. Wear your learning, like your watch, in a pri-

vate pocket; and do not merely pull it out and strike it merely to show you have one. If you are asked what o'clock it is, tell it; but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked like the watchman.

Upon the whole, remember that learning (I mean Greek and Roman learning) is a most useful and necessary ornament, which it is shameful not to be master of; but, at the same time, most carefully avoid those errors and abuses which I have mentioned, and which too often attend it. Remember, too, that great modern knowledge is still more necessary than ancient; and that you had better know perfectly the present than the old state of Europe; though I would have you well acquainted with both.

## THE GRACES — AGAINST LAUGHTER

BATH, *March* 9, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

I must, from time to time, remind you of what I have often recommended to you, and of what you cannot attend to too much; *sacrifice to the Graces.*[1] The different effects of the same things, said or done, when accompanied or abandoned by them, is almost

[1] Dr. Hill quotes: "Plato used to say to Xenocrates, the philosopher, who had a morose and unpolished manner, 'good Xenocrates, *sacrifice to the graces.*'" — Plutarch's *Lives.* "Prince Maurice never *sacrificed to the graces*, nor conversed amongst men of quality, but had most used the company of ordinary and inferior men with whom he loved to be very familiar." — Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion.*

inconceivable. They prepare the way to the heart; and the heart has such an influence over the understanding, that it is worth while to engage it in our interest. It is the whole of women, who are guided by nothing else: and it has so much to say, even with men, and the ablest men too, that it commonly triumphs in every struggle with the understanding. Monsieur de Rochefoucault,[1] in his Maxims, says, that *l'esprit est souvent la dupe du cœur.* If he had said, instead of *souvent*, *presque toujours*, I fear he would have been nearer the truth. This being the case, aim at the heart. Intrinsic merit alone will not do; it will gain you the general esteem of all; but not the particular affection, that is, the heart of any. To engage the affection of any particular person, you must, over and above your general merit, have some particular merit to that person, by services done or offered; by expressions of regard and esteem; by complaisance, attentions, etc., for him: and the graceful manner of doing all these things opens the way to the heart, and facilitates, or rather insures, their effects.

From your own observation, reflect what a disagreeable impression an awkward address, a slovenly figure, an ungraceful manner of speaking whether stuttering, muttering, monotony, or drawling, an unattentive behaviour, etc., make upon you, at first sight, in a stranger, and how they prejudice you against him, though, for ought you know, he may have great intrinsic sense

[1] Francis, Duke de la Rochefoucault, born, 1613; died, 1680.

and merit. And reflect, on the other hand, how much the opposites of all these things prepossess you, at first sight, in favour of those who enjoy them. You wish to find all good qualities in them, and are in some degree disappointed if you do not. A thousand little things, not separately to be defined, conspire to form these Graces, this *je ne sçais quoi*, that always pleases. A pretty person, genteel motions, a proper degree of dress, an harmonious voice, something open and cheerful in the countenance, but without laughing; a distinct and properly varied manner of speaking: all these things, and many others, are necessary ingredients in the composition of the pleasing *je ne sçais quoi*, which everybody feels, though nobody can describe. Observe carefully, then, what displeases or pleases you in others, and be persuaded, that, in general, the same thing will please or displease them in you.

Having mentioned laughing, I must particularly warn you against it: and I could heartily wish that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh while you live. Frequent and loud laughter is the characteristic of folly and ill manners: it is the manner in which the mob express their silly joy at silly things; and they call it being merry. In my mind there is nothing so illiberal, and so ill-bred, as audible laughter. True wit, or sense, never yet made anybody laugh; they are above it: they please the mind, and give a cheerfulness to the countenance. But it is low buffoonery, or silly accidents, that always excite laugh-

ter; and that is what people of sense and breeding should show themselves above. A man's going to sit down, in the supposition that he has a chair behind him, and falling down upon his breech for want of one, sets a whole company a laughing, when all the wit in the world would not do it; a plain proof, in my mind, how low and unbecoming a thing laughter is. Not to mention the disagreeable noise that it makes, and the shocking distortion of the face that it occasions. Laughter is easily restrained by a very little reflection; but, as it is generally connected with the idea of gaiety, people do not enough attend to its absurdity. I am neither of a melancholy, nor a cynical disposition; and am as willing, and as apt, to be pleased as anybody; but I am sure that, since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh.[1] Many people, at first from awkwardness and *mauvaise honte*, have got a very disagreeable and silly trick of laughing whenever they speak: and I know a man of very good parts, Mr. Waller, who cannot say the commonest thing without laughing; which makes those, who do not know him, take him at first for a natural fool.

This, and many other very disagreeable habits, are

[1] Swift "stubbornly resisted any tendency to laughter." — Johnson's *Works*, viii. 222. "By no merriment, either of others or of his own, was Pope ever seen excited to laughter." — *Ibid.*, 312. "There is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh, it is such a vulgar expression of the passion. Everybody can laugh." — Congreve's *Double Dealer*, i. 1.

owing to *mauvaise honte* at their first setting out in the world. They are ashamed in company, and so disconcerted that they do not know what they do, and try a thousand tricks to keep themselves in countenance; which tricks afterwards grow habitual to them. Some put their fingers in their nose, others scratch their head, others twirl their hats; in short, every awkward, ill-bred body has his trick. But the frequency does not justify the thing; and all these vulgar habits and awkwardness, though not criminal indeed, are most carefully to be guarded against, as they are great bars in the way of the art of pleasing. Remember, that to please, is almost to prevail, or at least a necessary previous step to it.

## ON THE STUDY OF HISTORY

LONDON, *April* 26, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Were most historical events traced up to their true causes, I fear we should not find them much more noble, nor disinterested, than Luther's disappointed avarice; and therefore I look with some contempt upon those refining and sagacious historians, who ascribe all, even the most common events, to some deep political cause; whereas mankind is made up of inconsistencies, and no man acts invariably up to his predominant character. The wisest man sometimes acts weakly, and the weakest sometimes wisely. Our

jarring passions, our variable humours, nay, our greater or lesser degree of health and spirits, produce such contradictions in our conduct, that, I believe, those are the oftenest mistaken, who ascribe our actions to the most seemingly obvious motives: and I am convinced, that a light supper, and a good night's sleep, and a fine morning, have sometimes made a hero of the same man, who by an indigestion, a restless night, and a rainy morning, would have proved a coward.

Our best conjectures, therefore, as to the true springs of actions, are but very uncertain; and the actions themselves are all that we must pretend to know from history. That Cæsar was murdered by twenty-three conspirators, I make no doubt; but I very much doubt, that their love of liberty, and of their country, was their sole, or even principal motive; and I dare say that, if the truth were known, we should find that many other motives at least concurred, even in the great Brutus himself; such as pride, envy, personal pique, and disappointment. Nay, I cannot help carrying my Pyrrhonism[1] still further, and extending it often to historical facts themselves, at least to most of the circumstances with which they are related; and every day's experience confirms me in this historical incredulity. Do we ever hear the most recent fact related exactly in the same way, by the several people who were at the same time

[1] Pyrrho, the Philosopher of Elis, founder of the Sceptics or Pyrrhonists, flourished about B.C. 340.

eye-witnesses of it? No. One mistakes, another misrepresents; and others warp it a little to their own turn of mind, or private views. A man, who has been concerned in a transaction, will not write it fairly; and a man who has not, cannot.

But, notwithstanding all this uncertainty, history is not the less necessary to be known; as the best histories are taken for granted, and are the frequent subjects both of conversation and writing. Though I am convinced that Cæsar's ghost never appeared to Brutus, yet I should be much ashamed to be ignorant of that fact, as related by the historians of those times. Thus the Pagan theology is universally received as matter for writing and conversation, though believed now by nobody; and we talk of Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, etc., as gods, though we know that, if they ever existed at all, it was only as mere mortal men. This historical Pyrrhonism, then, proves nothing against the study and knowledge of history; which, of all other studies, is the most necessary for a man who is to live in the world. It only points out to us, not to be too decisive and peremptory; and to be cautious how we draw inferences, for our own practice, from remote facts, partially or ignorantly related; of which we can at best, but imperfectly guess, and certainly not know, the real motives. The testimonies of ancient history must necessarily be weaker than those of modern, as all testimony grows weaker and weaker, as it is more and more remote from us.

I would therefore advise you to study ancient history, in general, as other people do; that is, not to be ignorant of any of those facts which are universally received, upon the faith of the best historians; and, whether true or false, you have them as other people have them. But modern history, I mean particularly that of the three last centuries, is what I would have you apply to with the greatest attention and exactness. There the probability of coming at the truth is much greater, as the testimonies are much more recent; besides, anecdotes, memoirs, and original letters, often come to the aid of modern history.

## ON BEING AT EASE WITH MEN OF ALL RANKS

LONDON, *May* 17, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY.

Your first setting out at Court has, I find, been very favourable; and his Polish majesty has distinguished you. I hope you received that mark of distinction with respect and with steadiness, which is the proper behaviour of a man of fashion. People of a low obscure education, cannot stand the rays of greatness: they are frightened out of their wits when kings and great men speak to them; they are awkward, ashamed, and do not know what or how to answer; whereas *les honnêtes gens* are not dazzled by superior rank; they know and pay all the respect that is due to it,

but they do it without being disconcerted, and can converse just as easily with a king as with any one of his subjects. That is the great advantage of being introduced young into good company, and being used early to converse with one's superiors. How many men have I seen here, who, after having had the full benefit of an English education, first at school and then at the University, when they have been presented to the king, did not know whether they stood upon their heads or their heels! If the king spoke to them, they were annihilated; they trembled, endeavoured to put their hands in their pockets, and missed them, let their hats fall, and were ashamed to take them up; and, in short, put themselves in every attitude but the right, that is, the easy and natural one. The characteristic of a well-bred man is, to converse with his inferiors without insolence, and with his superiors with respect and with ease. He talks to kings without concern; he trifles with women of the first condition, with familiarity, gaiety, but respect; and converses with his equals, whether he is acquainted with them or not, upon general, common topics, that are not, however, quite frivolous, without the least concern of mind, or awkwardness of body; neither of which can appear to advantage, but when they are perfectly easy.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD ENUNCIATION

LONDON, *June* 21, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Your very bad enunciation runs so much in my head, and gives me such real concern, that it will be the subject of this, and I believe of many more letters. I congratulate both you and myself that I was informed of it (as I hope) in time to prevent it; and shall ever think myself, as hereafter you will I am sure think yourself, infinitely obliged to Sir Charles Williams for informing me of it. Good God! if this ungraceful and disagreeable manner of speaking had, either by your negligence or mine, become habitual to you, as in a couple of years more it would have been, what a figure would you have made in company or in a public assembly! Who would have liked you in the one, or have attended to you in the other? Read what Cicero and Quintilian say of enunciation, and see what a stress they lay upon the gracefulness of it; nay, Cicero goes further, and even maintains that a good figure is necessary for an orator; and, particularly, that he must not be *vastus*, — that is, overgrown and clumsy. He shows by it, that he knew mankind well, and knew the powers of an agreeable figure and a graceful manner.

Men, as well as women, are much oftener led by their hearts than by their understandings. The way

to the heart is through the senses; please their eyes and their ears, and the work is half done. I have frequently known a man's fortune decided for ever by his first address. If it is pleasing, people are hurried involuntarily into a persuasion that he has a merit which possibly he has not; as, on the other hand, if it is ungraceful, they are immediately prejudiced against him, and unwilling to allow him the merit which it may be he has. Nor is this sentiment so unjust and unreasonable as at first it may seem; for, if a man has parts, he must know of what infinite consequence it is to him to have a graceful manner of speaking, and a genteel and pleasing address: he will cultivate and improve them to the utmost. Your figure is a good one; you have no natural defect in the organs of speech; your address may be engaging and your manner of speaking graceful if you will; so that if they are not so, neither I nor the world can ascribe it to anything but your want of parts. What is the constant and just observation as to all actors upon the stage? Is it not, that those who have the best sense always speak the best, though they may happen not to have the best voices? They will speak plainly, distinctly, and with the proper emphasis, be their voices ever so bad. Had Roscius spoken *quick*, *thick*, and *ungracefully*, I will answer for it, that Cicero would not have thought him worth the oration which he made in his favour. Words were given us to communicate our ideas by; and there must be something

inconceivably absurd in uttering them in such a manner as that either people cannot understand them, or will not desire to understand them.

## THE LAZY AND THE FRIVOLOUS MIND

LONDON, *July* 26, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

There are two sorts of understandings; one of which hinders a man from ever being considerable, and the other commonly makes him ridiculous; I mean, the lazy mind, and the trifling, frivolous mind. Yours, I hope, is neither. The lazy mind will not take the trouble of going to the bottom of anything; but, discouraged by the first difficulties, (and everything worth knowing or having is attended with some,) stops short, contents itself with easy, and, consequently, superficial knowledge, and prefers a great degree of ignorance to a small degree of trouble. These people either think, or represent, most things as impossible; whereas few things are so, to industry and activity. But difficulties seem to them impossibilities, or at least they pretend to think them so, by way of excuse for their laziness. An hour's attention to the same object is too laborious for them; they take everything in the light in which it first presents itself, never consider it in all its different views; and, in short, never think it thorough. The consequence of this is, that, when they come to speak upon these subjects before people who have considered

them with attention, they only discover their own ignorance and laziness, and lay themselves open to answers that put them in confusion. Do not then be discouraged by the first difficulties, but *contra audentior ito;* and resolve to go to the bottom of all those things which every gentleman ought to know well.

Those arts of sciences, which are peculiar to certain professions, need not be deeply known by those who are not intended for those professions. As for instance; fortification and navigation; of both which, a superficial and general knowledge, such as the common course of conversation, with a very little inquiry on your part, will give you, is sufficient. Though, by the way, a little more knowledge of fortification may be of some use to you; as the events of war, in sieges, make many of the terms of that science occur frequently in common conversations; and one would be sorry to say, like the Marquis de Mascarille, in Molière's *Précieuses Ridicules*, when he hears of *une demie Lune; Ma foi, c'étoit bien une Lune toute entière.* But those things which every gentleman, independently of profession, should know, he ought to know well, and dive into all the depths of them. Such are languages, history, and geography ancient and modern; philosophy, rational logic, rhetoric; and, for you particularly, the constitutions, and the civil and military state of every country in Europe. This, I confess, is a pretty large circle of knowledge attended with some difficulties, and requiring some trouble; which, how-

ever, an active and industrious mind will overcome, and be amply repaid.

The trifling and frivolous mind is always busied, but to little purpose; it takes little objects for great ones, and throws away upon trifles that time and attention, which only important things deserve. Knick-knacks, butterflies, shells, insects, etc., are the objects of their most serious researches. They contemplate the dress, not the characters, of the company they keep. They attend more to the decorations of a play, than to the sense of it; and to the ceremonies of a court, more than to its politics. Such an employment of time is an absolute loss of it. You have now, at most, three years to employ, either well or ill; for, as I have often told you, you will be all your life, what you shall be three years hence. For God's sake, then, reflect: will you throw away this time, either in laziness, or in trifles? Or will you not rather employ every moment of it in a manner that must so soon reward you, with so much pleasure, figure, and character? I cannot, I will not, doubt of your choice. Read only useful books; and never quit a subject till you are thoroughly master of it, but read and inquire on till then. When you are in company, bring the conversation to some useful subject, but *à portée* of that company. Points of history, matters of literature, the customs of particular countries, the several orders of Knighthood, as Teutonic, Maltese, etc., are surely better subjects of conversation than the weather, dress, or fiddle-faddle

stories, that carry no information along with them. The characters of Kings and great men are only to be learned in conversation; for they are never fairly written during their lives. This, therefore, is an entertaining and instructive subject of conversation, and will likewise give you an opportunity of observing how very differently characters are given, from the different passions and views of those who give them.

Never be ashamed nor afraid of asking questions; for if they lead to information, and if you accompany them with some excuse, you will never be reckoned an impertinent or rude questioner. All those things, in the common course of life, depend entirely upon the manner; and in that respect the vulgar saying is true, "That one man may better steal a horse, than another look over the hedge." There are few things that may not be said in some manner or other; either in a seeming confidence, or a genteel irony, or introduced with wit: and one great part of the knowledge of the world consists in knowing when, and where, to make use of these different manners. The graces of the person, the countenance, and the way of speaking, contribute so much to this, that I am convinced, the very same thing, said by a genteel person, in an engaging way, and *gracefully and distinctly* spoken, would please; which would shock, if *muttered* out by an awkward figure, with a sullen, serious countenance. The poets always represent Venus as attended by the three Graces, to intimate that even Beauty will not do with-

out. I think they should have given Minerva three also; for, without them, I am sure, learning is very unattractive. Invoke them, then, *distinctly*, to accompany all your words and motions. Adieu!

## ON READING HISTORY

LONDON, *August* 30, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Your reflections upon the conduct of France, from the Treaty of Munster to this time, are very just; and I am very glad to find by them that you not only read, but that you think and reflect upon what you read. Many great readers load their memories without exercising their judgments, and make lumber-rooms of their heads, instead of furnishing them usefully: facts are heaped upon facts without order or distinction, and may justly be said to compose that

> Rudis indigestaque moles,
> Quam dixere chaos.[1]

Go on, then, in the way of reading that you are in; take nothing for granted upon the bare authority of the author, but weigh and consider in your own mind the probability of the facts and the justness of the reflections. Consult different authors upon the same facts, and form your opinion upon the greater or lesser degree of probability arising from the whole, which, in

[1] Adapted from Ovid, *Metam.* I. 7.

my mind, is the utmost stretch of historical faith: certainty (I fear) not being to be found. When an historian pretends to give you the causes and motives of the events, compare those causes and motives with the characters and interests of the parties concerned, and judge for yourself whether they correspond or not. Consider whether you cannot assign others more probable; and in that examination do not despise some very mean and trifling causes of the actions of great men; for so various and inconsistent is human nature, so strong and so changeable are our passions, so fluctuating are our wills, and so much are our minds influenced by the accidents of our bodies, that every man is more the man of the day than a regular and consequential character. The best have something bad, and something little; the worst have something good, and sometimes something great; for I do not believe what Velleius Paterculus (for the sake of saying a pretty thing) says of Scipio, *Qui nihil non laudandum aut fecit, aut dixit, aut sensit.* As for the reflections of historians, with which they think it necessary to interlard their histories, or at least to conclude their chapters (and which, in the French histories, are always introduced with a *tant il est vrai*, and in the English, *so true it is*), do not adopt them implicitly upon the credit of the author, but analyse them yourself, and judge whether they are true or not.

## ON RIDICULING OTHERS

LONDON, *September* 5, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Men will much sooner forgive an injustice than an insult. Every man is not ambitious, or covetous, or passionate; but every man has pride enough in his composition to feel and resent the least slight and contempt. Remember, therefore, most carefully to conceal your contempt, however just, wherever you would not make an implacable enemy. Men are much more unwilling to have their weaknesses and their imperfections known, than their crimes; and, if you hint to a man that you think him silly, ignorant, or even ill-bred or awkward, he will hate you more, and longer, than if you tell him plainly that you think him a rogue. Never yield to that temptation, which to most young men is very strong, of exposing other people's weaknesses and infirmities, for the sake either of diverting the company, or of showing your own superiority. You may get the laugh on your side by it, for the present; but you will make enemies by it for ever; and even those who laugh with you then will, upon reflection, fear, and consequently hate you; besides that, it is ill-natured, and a good heart desires rather to conceal than expose other people's weaknesses or misfortunes. If you have wit, use it to please, and not to hurt: you may shine like the sun in the temperate zones, without scorching. Here it is wished for: under the line it is dreaded.

## ON EXALTING PAST EVENTS—SECRETS

LONDON, *September* 13, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

A very just observation of the Cardinal de Retz is, That the things which happen in our own times, and which we see ourselves, do not surprise us near so much as the things which we read of in times past, though not in the least more extraordinary; and adds, that he is persuaded that, when Caligula made his horse a Consul, the people of Rome, at that time, were not greatly surprised at it, having necessarily been in some degree prepared for it, by an insensible gradation of extravagancies from the same quarter. This is so true, that we read every day, with astonishment, things which we see every day without surprise. We wonder at the intrepidity of a Leonidas, a Codrus, and a Curtius, and are not the least surprised to hear of a sea-captain who has blown up his ship, his crew, and himself, that they might not fall into the hands of the enemies of his country. I cannot help reading of Porsenna and Regulus with surprise and reverence; and yet I remember that I saw, without either, the execution of Shepherd, a boy of eighteen years old, who intended to shoot the late King, and who would have been pardoned, if he would have expressed the least sorrow for his intended crime; but, on the contrary, he declared that if he was pardoned he would attempt it again, that he thought it a duty which he

owed his country, and that he died with pleasure for having endeavoured to perform it.[1] Reason equals Shepherd to Regulus; but prejudice, and the recency of the fact, make Shepherd a common malefactor, and Regulus a hero.

Examine carefully, and re-consider all your notions of things; analyse them, and discover their component parts and see if habit and prejudice are not the principal ones; weigh the matter, upon which you are to form your opinion, in the equal and impartial scales of reason. It is not to be conceived how many people, capable of reasoning if they would, live and die in a thousand errors, from laziness; they will rather adopt the prejudices of others, than give themselves the trouble of forming opinions of their own. They say things, at first, because other people have said them, and then they persist in them, because they have said them themselves.

The last observation that I shall now mention of the Cardinal's is: That a secret is more easily kept by a good many people than one commonly imagines. By this he means a secret of importance, among people interested in the keeping of it. And it is certain that people of business know the importance of secrecy, and will observe it, where they are concerned in the

[1] James Shepherd, apprentice to a coachbuilder in Devonshire Street, was executed at Tyburn in March, 1718, on the evidence of a clergyman named Leake, whom he had informed of his intention by letter.

event. And the Cardinal does not suppose that anybody is silly enough to tell a secret merely from the desire of telling it, to any one that is not some way or other interested in the keeping of it, and concerned in the event. To go and tell any friend, wife, or mistress, any secret with which they have nothing to do, is discovering to them such an unretentive weakness, as must convince them that you will tell it to twenty others, and, consequently, that they may reveal it without the risk of being discovered. But a secret properly communicated, only to those who are to be concerned in the thing in question, will probably be kept by them, though they should be a good many. Little secrets are commonly told again, but great ones generally kept.

Adieu!

## ON THE REFINEMENTS OF CASUISTRY

LONDON, *September* 27, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Pray let no quibbles of lawyers, no refinements of casuists, break into the plain notions of right and wrong, which every man's right reason, and plain common sense, suggest to him. To do as you would be done by, is the plain, sure, and undisputed rule of morality and justice. Stick to that; and be convinced, that whatever breaks into it, in any degree, however speciously it may be turned, and however puzzling it

may be to answer it, is, notwithstanding, false in itself, unjust, and criminal. I do not know a crime in the world which is not, by the casuists among the Jesuits (especially the twenty-four collected, I think, by Escobar[1]) allowed in some, or many, cases not to be criminal. The principles first laid down by them are often specious, the reasonings plausible, but the conclusion always a lie; for it is contrary to that evident and undeniable rule of justice which I have mentioned above, of not doing to any one what you would not have him do to you. But, however, these refined pieces of casuistry and sophistry, being very convenient and welcome to people's passions and appetites, they gladly accept the indulgence, without desiring to detect the fallacy of the reasoning; and, indeed, many, I might say most, people are not able to do it, which makes the publication of such quibblings and refinements the more pernicious. I am no skilful casuist, nor subtle disputant; and yet I would undertake to justify and qualify the profession of a highwayman, step by step, and so plausibly as to make many ignorant people embrace the profession, as an innocent, if not even a laudable one; and to puzzle people of some degree of knowledge to answer me point by point.

I have seen a book, entitled *Quidlibet ex Quolibet*,

[1] A Spanish Jesuit (1589–1669) wrote "Cases of Conscience," etc.; his doctrines were opposed by Pascal in the *Lettres Provinciales*.

or, the art of making anything out of anything; which is not so difficult as it would seem, if once one quits certain plain truths, obvious in gross to every understanding, in order to run after the ingenious refinements of warm imaginations and speculative reasonings. Doctor Berkeley,[1] Bishop of Cloyne, a very worthy, ingenious, and learned man, has written a book to prove that there is no such thing as matter, and that nothing exists but an idea: that you and I only fancy ourselves eating, drinking, and sleeping; you at Leipsig, and I at London; that we think we have flesh and blood, legs, arms, etc., but that we are only spirit. His arguments are, strictly speaking, unanswerable; but yet I am so far from being convinced by them, that I am determined to go on to eat and drink, and walk and ride, in order to keep that *matter*, which I so mistakenly imagine my body at present to consist of, in as good plight as possible. Common sense (which, in truth, is very uncommon) is the best sense I know of; abide by it; it will counsel you best. Read and hear, for your amusement, ingenious systems, nice questions subtilely agitated, with all the refinements that warm imaginations suggest, but consider them only as exercitations for the mind, and return always to settle with common sense.

[1] George Berkeley, born 1685, F.T.C.D., 1707, Bp. of Cloyne, 1733, died 1753.

## TRUE GOOD COMPANY

BATH, *October* 12, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

You will gradually be going into the great world; where the first impressions that you shall give of yourself will be of great importance to you; but those which you shall receive will be decisive, for they always stick. To keep good company, especially at your first setting out, is the way to receive good impressions. If you ask me what I mean by good company, I will confess to you, that it is pretty difficult to define; but I will endeavour to make you understand it as well as I can.

Good company is not what respective sets of company are pleased either to call or think themselves, but it is that company which all the people of the place call and acknowledge to be good company, notwithstanding some objections which they may form to some of the individuals who compose it. It consists chiefly (but by no means without exception) of people of considerable birth, rank, and character; for people of neither birth nor rank are frequently, and very justly, admitted into it, if distinguished by any peculiar merit, or eminency in any liberal art or science. Nay, so motley a thing is good company, that many people, without birth, rank, or merit, intrude into it by their own forwardness, and others slide into it by the pro-

tection of some considerable person; and some even of indifferent characters and morals make part of it. But, in the main, the good part preponderates, and people of infamous and blasted characters are never admitted. In this fashionable good company, the best manners and the best language of the place are most unquestionably to be learnt; for they establish and give the tone to both, which are therefore called the language and manners of good company, there being no legal tribunal to ascertain either.

A company consisting wholly of people of the first quality cannot, for that reason, be called good company, in the common acceptation of the phrase, unless they are, into the bargain, the fashionable and accredited company of the place; for people of the very first quality can be as silly, as ill-bred, and as worthless, as people of the meanest degree. On the other hand, a company consisting entirely of people of very low condition, whatever their merit or parts may be, can never be called good company, and consequently should not be much frequented, though by no means despised.

A company wholly composed of men of learning, though greatly to be valued and respected, is not meant by the words *good company;* they cannot have the easy manners and *tournure* of the world, as they do not live in it. If you can bear your part well in such a company, it is extremely right to be in it sometimes, and you will be but more esteemed in other companies for having a place in that; but then do

not let it engross you, for, if you do, you will be only considered as one of the *literati* by profession, which is not the way either to shine or rise in the world.

The company of professed wits and poets is extremely inviting to most young men, who, if they have wit themselves, are pleased with it, and, if they have none, are sillily proud of being one of it; but it should be frequented with moderation and judgment, and you should by no means give yourself up to it. A wit is a very unpopular denomination, as it carries terror along with it; and people in general are as much afraid of a live wit in company as a woman is of a gun, which she thinks may go off of itself, and do her a mischief. Their acquaintance is, however, worth seeking, and their company worth frequenting; but not exclusively of others, nor to such a degree as to be considered only as one of that particular set.

But the company which of all others you should most carefully avoid, is that low company which, in every sense of the word, is low indeed — low in rank, low in parts, low in manners, and low in merit. You will, perhaps, be surprised that I should think it necessary to warn you against such company; but yet I do not think it wholly unnecessary, after the many instances which I have seen of men of sense and rank, discredited, vilified, and undone, by keeping such company. Vanity, that source of many of our follies, and of some of our crimes, has sunk many a man into company in every light infinitely below himself, for the

sake of being the first man in it; there he dictates, is applauded, admired; and, for the sake of being the *Coryphæus* of that wretched chorus, disgraces and disqualifies himself soon for any better company. Depend upon it, you will sink or rise to the level of the company which you commonly keep; — people will judge of you, and not unreasonably, by that. There is good sense in the Spanish saying, "Tell me whom you live with, and I will tell you who you are." Make it therefore your business, wherever you are, to get into that company which everybody of the place allows to be the best company, next to their own: — which is the best definition that I can give you of good company. But here, too, one caution is very necessary, for want of which many young men have been ruined, even in good company. Good company (as I have before observed) is composed of a great variety of fashionable people, whose characters and morals are very different, though their manners are pretty much the same.

When a young man, new in the world, first gets into that company, he very rightly determines to conform to and imitate it; but then he too often, and fatally, mistakes the objects of his imitation. He has often heard that absurd term of genteel and fashionable vices. He there sees some people who shine, and who in general are admired and esteemed; and observes that these people are immoral, or drunkards, or gamesters; upon which he adopts their vices, mis-

taking their defects for their perfections, and thinking that they owe their fashion and their lustre to those genteel vices. Whereas it is exactly the reverse, for these people have acquired their reputation by their parts, their learning, their good-breeding, and other real accomplishments; and are only blemished and lowered, in the opinions of all reasonable people, and of their own, in time, by these genteel and fashionable vices.

## CONDUCT IN GOOD COMPANY

BATH, *October* 19, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Having, in my last, pointed out what sort of company you should keep, I will now give you some rules for your conduct in it; rules which my own experience and observation enable me to lay down and communicate to you with some degree of confidence. I have often given you hints of this kind before, but then it has been by snatches; I will now be more regular and methodical. I shall say nothing with regard to your bodily carriage and address, but leave them to the care of your dancing-master, and to your own attention to the best models; remember, however, that they are of consequence.

Talk often, but never long; in that case, if you do not please, at least you are sure not to tire your hearers. Pay your own reckoning, but do not treat

the whole company; this being one of the very few cases in which people do not care to be treated, every one being fully convinced that he has wherewithal to pay.

Tell stories very seldom, and absolutely never but where they are very apt, and very short. Omit every circumstance that is not material, and beware of digressions. To have frequent recourse to narrative betrays great want of imagination.

Never hold anybody by the button, or the hand, in order to be heard out; for, if people are not willing to hear you, you had much better hold your tongue than them.

Most long talkers single out some one unfortunate man in company (commonly him whom they observe to be the most silent, or their next neighbour) to whisper, or at least, in a half voice, to convey a continuity of words to. This is excessively ill-bred, and, in some degree, a fraud; conversation-stock being a joint and common property. But, on the other hand, if one of these unmerciful talkers lays hold of you, hear him with patience, and at least seeming attention, if he is worth obliging; for nothing will oblige him more than a patient hearing, as nothing would hurt him more than either to leave him in the midst of his discourse, or to discover your impatience under your affliction.

Take, rather than give, the tone of the company you are in. If you have parts, you will show them, more or less, upon every subject; and, if you have

not, you had better talk sillily upon a subject of other people's than of your own choosing.

Avoid as much as you can, in mixed companies, argumentative polemical conversations; which, though they should not, yet certainly do, indispose, for a time, the contending parties towards each other; and, if the controversy grows warm and noisy, endeavour to put an end to it by some genteel levity or joke. I quieted such a conversation hubbub once, by representing to them that, though I was persuaded none there present would repeat, out of company, what passed in it, yet I could not answer for the discretion of the passengers in the street, who must necessarily hear all that was said.

Above all things, and upon all occasions, avoid speaking of yourself, if it be possible. Such is the natural pride and vanity of our hearts, that it perpetually breaks out, even in people of the best parts, in all the various modes and figures of the egotism.

Some abruptly speak advantageously of themselves, without either pretence or provocation. They are impudent. Others proceed more artfully, as they imagine, and forge accusations against themselves, complain of calumnies which they never heard, in order to justify themselves, by exhibiting a catalogue of their many virtues. "They acknowledge it may, indeed, seem odd, that they should talk in that manner of themselves; it is what they do not like, and what they never would have done; no, no tortures should ever

have forced it from them, if they had not been thus unjustly and monstrously accused. But, in these cases, justice is surely due to one's self, as well as to others; and, when our character is attacked, we may say, in our own justification, what otherwise we never would have said." This thin veil of modesty drawn before vanity, is much too transparent to conceal it, even from very moderate discernment.

Others go more modestly and more slyly still (as they think) to work; but, in my mind, still more ridiculously. They confess themselves (not without some degree of shame and confusion) into all the cardinal virtues; by first degrading them into weaknesses, and then owning their misfortune, in being made up of those weaknesses. "They cannot see people suffer, without sympathising with, and endeavouring to help them. They cannot see people want, without relieving them; though, truly, their own circumstances cannot very well afford it. They cannot help speaking truth, though they know all the imprudence of it. In short, they know that, with all these weaknesses, they are not fit to live in the world, much less to thrive in it. But they are now too old to change, and must rub on as well as they can." This sounds too ridiculous and *outré*, almost for the stage; and yet, take my word for it, you will frequently meet with it upon the common stage of the world. And here I will observe, by the bye, that you will often meet with characters in nature so extravagant, that a discreet poet would not venture

to set them upon the stage in their true and high colouring.

This principle of vanity and pride is so strong in human nature, that it descends even to the lowest objects; and one often sees people angling for praise, where, admitting all they say to be true (which, by the way, it seldom is), no just praise is to be caught. One man affirms that he has rode post an hundred miles in six hours: probably it is a lie; but supposing it to be true, what then? Why, he is a very good post-boy, that is all. Another asserts, and probably not without oaths, that he has drank six or eight bottles of wine at a sitting; out of charity, I will believe him a liar; for, if I do not, I must think him a beast.

Such, and a thousand more, are the follies and extravagancies, which vanity draws people into, and which always defeat their own purpose, and, as Waller says upon another subject, —

> Make the wretch the most despised,
> Where most he wishes to be prized.[1]

The only sure way of avoiding these evils is never to speak of yourself at all. But when historically you are obliged to mention yourself, take care not to drop one single word, that can directly or indirectly be con-

[1] These lines are adapted from Waller's "On Love." The couplet is:

> Postures which render him despised,
> Where he endeavours to be prized.

He quotes the next two lines in letter of 24th May, 1750.

strued as fishing for applause. Be your character what it will, it will be known; and nobody will take it upon your own word. Never imagine that anything you can say yourself will varnish your defects, or add lustre to your perfections; but, on the contrary, it may, and nine times in ten will, make the former more glaring, and the latter obscure. If you are silent upon your own subject, neither envy, indignation, nor ridicule will obstruct or allay the applause which you may really deserve; but if you publish your own panegyric, upon any occasion, or in any shape whatsoever, and however artfully dressed or disguised, they will all conspire against you, and you will be disappointed of the very end you aim at.

Take care never to seem dark and mysterious; which is not only a very unamiable character, but a very suspicious one too; if you seem mysterious with others, they will be really so with you, and you will know nothing. The height of abilities is, to have *volto sciolto* and *pensieri stretti;*[1] that is, a frank, open, and ingenuous exterior, with a prudent and reserved interior; to be upon your own guard, and yet, by a seeming natural openness, to put people off theirs. Depend upon it, nine in ten of every company you are in will avail themselves of every indiscreet and unguarded expression of yours, if they can turn it to their

[1] This is a favourite maxim of Chesterfield's. It was also the advice given by Sir Henry Wotton to Milton, just before he set out for the Continent, in the letter in which he acknowledges *Comus*.

own advantage. A prudent reserve is therefore as necessary as a seeming openness is prudent. Always look people in the face when you speak to them; the not doing it is thought to imply conscious guilt; besides that, you lose the advantage of observing by their countenances what impression your discourse makes upon them. In order to know people's real sentiments, I trust much more to my eyes than to my ears; for they can say whatever they have a mind I should hear; but they can seldom help looking what they have no intention that I should know.

Neither retail nor receive scandal willingly; for though the defamation of others may for the present gratify the malignity of the pride of our hearts, cool reflection will draw very disadvantageous conclusions from such a disposition; and in the case of scandal, as in that of robbery, the receiver is always thought as bad as the thief.

Mimicry, which is the common and favourite amusement of little low minds, is in the utmost contempt with great ones. It is the lowest and most illiberal of all buffoonery. Pray, neither practise it yourself, nor applaud it in others. Besides that, the person mimicked is insulted; and, as I have often observed to you before, an insult is never forgiven.

I need not, I believe, advise you to adapt your conversation to the people you are conversing with; for I suppose you would not, without this caution, have talked upon the same subject and in the same man-

ner to a Minister of state, a Bishop, a philosopher, a Captain, and a woman. A man of the world must, like the chameleon, be able to take every different hue, which is by no means a criminal or abject, but a necessary complaisance, for it relates only to manners, and not to morals.

One word only as to swearing; and that I hope and believe is more than is necessary. You may sometimes hear some people in good company interlard their discourse with oaths, by way of embellishment, as they think; but you must observe, too, that those who do so are never those who contribute in any degree to give that company the denomination of good company. They are always subalterns, or people of low education; for that practice, besides that it has no one temptation to plead, is as silly and as illiberal as it is wicked.

Loud laughter is the mirth of the mob, who are only pleased with silly things; for true wit or good sense never excited a laugh since the creation of the world. A man of parts and fashion is therefore only seen to smile, but never heard to laugh.

But, to conclude this long letter; all the above-mentioned rules, however carefully you may observe them, will lose half their effect if unaccompanied by the Graces. Whatever you say, if you say it with a supercilious, cynical face, or an embarrassed countenance, or a silly, disconcerted grin, will be ill received. If, into the bargain, *you mutter it, or utter it indistinctly and ungracefully*, it will be still worse received.

If your air and address are vulgar, awkward, and *gauche*, you may be esteemed indeed if you have great intrinsic merit; but you will never please, and without pleasing you will rise but heavily.

## CONDUCT IN GOOD COMPANY (*Continued*)

BATH, *October* 29, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

I have long since done mentioning your great religious and moral duties, because I could not make your understanding so bad a compliment, as to suppose that you wanted or could receive any new instructions upon those two important points. Mr. Harte, I am sure, has not neglected them; besides, they are so obvious to common sense and reason, that commentators may (as they often do) perplex, but cannot make them clearer. My province, therefore, is to supply by my experience your hitherto inevitable inexperience in the ways of the world. People at your age are in a state of natural ebriety, and want rails and *gardefous* wherever they go, to hinder them from breaking their necks. This drunkenness of youth is not only tolerated, but even pleases, if kept within certain bounds of discretion and decency. Those bounds are the point which it is difficult for the drunken man himself to find out; and there it is that the experience of a friend may not only serve, but save him.

Carry with you, and welcome, into company all the gaiety and spirits, but as little of the giddiness of youth as you can. The former will charm, but the latter will often, though innocently, implacably offend. Inform yourself of the characters and situations of the company before you give way to what your imagination may prompt you to say. There are in all companies more wrong heads than right ones, and many more who deserve than who like censure. Should you therefore expatiate in the praise of some virtue, which some in company notoriously want, or declaim against any vice which others are notoriously infected with, your reflections, however general and unapplied, will, by being applicable, be thought personal and levelled at those people. This consideration points out to you sufficiently not to be suspicious and captious yourself, nor to suppose that things, because they may, are therefore meant at you. The manners of well-bred people secure one from those indirect and mean attacks; but if, by chance, a flippant woman or a pert coxcomb lets off anything of that kind, it is much better not to seem to understand, than to reply to it.

Cautiously avoid talking of either your own or other people's domestic affairs. Yours are nothing to them, but tedious; theirs are nothing to you. The subject is a tender one; and it is odds but you touch somebody or other's sore place; for in this case there is no trusting to specious appearances, which may be, and often are, so contrary to the real situations of things

between men and their wives, parents and their children, seeming friends, etc., that, with the best intentions in the world, one often blunders disagreeably.

Remember, that the wit, humour, and jokes of most mixed companies are local. They thrive in that particular soil, but will not often bear transplanting. Every company is differently circumstanced, has its particular cant and jargon, which may give occasion to wit and mirth within that circle, but would seem flat and insipid in any other, and therefore will not bear repeating. Nothing makes a man look sillier than a pleasantry not relished or not understood; and if he meets with a profound silence when he expected a general applause, or, what is worse, if he is desired to explain the *bon mot*, his awkward and embarrassed situation is easier imagined than described. *A propos* of repeating; take great care never to repeat (I do not mean here the pleasantries) in one company what you hear in another. Things seemingly indifferent, may, by circulation, have much graver consequences than you would imagine. Besides, there is a general tacit trust in conversation by which a man is obliged not to report anything out of it, though he is not immediately enjoined secrecy. A retailer of this kind is sure to draw himself into a thousand scrapes and discussions, and to be shyly and uncomfortably received wherever he goes.

You will find, in most good company, some people who only keep their place there by a contemptible title

enough, — these are what we call *very good-natured fellows*, and the French *bons diables*. The truth is, they are people without any parts or fancy, and who, having no will of their own, readily assent to, concur in, and applaud whatever is said or done in the company; and adopt, with the same alacrity, the most virtuous or the most criminal, the wisest or the silliest scheme, that happens to be entertained by the majority of the company. This foolish, and often criminal complaisance, flows from a foolish cause, — the want of any other merit. I hope you will hold your place in company by a nobler tenure, and that you will hold it (you can bear a quibble, I believe, yet) *in capite*. Have a will and an opinion of your own, and adhere to them steadily; but then do it with good-humour, good-breeding, and (if you have it) with urbanity; for you have not yet beard enough either to preach or censure.

All other kinds of complaisance are not only blameless, but necessary in good company. Not to seem to perceive the little weaknesses, and the idle but innocent affectations of the company, but even to flatter them in a certain manner, is not only very allowable, but, in truth, a sort of polite duty. They will be pleased with you, if you do; and will certainly not be reformed by you, if you do not. For instance; you will find, in every *groupe* of company, two principal figures, *viz.* the fine lady and the fine gentleman; who absolutely give the law of wit, language, fashion, and

taste, to the rest of that society. There is always a strict, and often, for the time being, a tender alliance between these two figures. The lady looks upon her empire as founded upon the divine right of beauty (and full as good a divine right it is, as any King, Emperor, or Pope can pretend to); she requires, and commonly meets with, unlimited passive obedience. And why should she not meet with it? Her demands go no higher than to have her unquestioned pre-eminence in beauty, wit, and fashion, firmly established. Few Sovereigns (by the way) are so reasonable. The fine gentleman's claims of right are, *mutatis mutandis*, the same; and though, indeed, he is not always a wit *de jure*, yet, as he is the wit *de facto* of that company, he is entitled to a share of your allegiance; and everybody expects, at least, as much as they are entitled to, if not something more. Prudence bids you make your court to these joint Sovereigns; and no duty, that I know of, forbids it. Rebellion, here, is exceedingly dangerous, and inevitably punished by banishment, and immediate forfeiture of all your wit, manners, taste, and fashion; as, on the other hand, a cheerful submission, not without some flattery, is sure to procure you a strong recommendation, and most effectual pass, throughout all their, and probably the neighbouring dominions. With a moderate share of sagacity, you will, before you have been half an hour in their company, easily discover these two principal figures; both by the deference which you will observe

the whole company pay them, and by that easy, careless, and serene air, which their consciousness of power gives them. As in this case, so in all others, aim always at the highest; get always into the highest company, and address yourself particularly to the highest in it. The search after the unattainable philosopher's stone has occasioned a thousand useful discoveries, which otherwise would never have been made.

What the French justly call *les manières nobles*, are only to be acquired in the very best companies. They are the distinguishing characteristics of men of fashion; people of low education never wear them so close but that some part or other of the original vulgarism appears. *Les manières nobles* equally forbid insolent contempt, or low envy and jealousy. Low people in good circumstances, fine clothes, and equipages, will insolently show contempt for all those who cannot afford as fine clothes, as good an equipage, and who have not (as their term is) as much money in their pockets; on the other hand, they are gnawed with envy, and cannot help discovering it, of those who surpass them in any of these articles, which are far from being sure criterions of merit. They are likewise jealous of being slighted, and, consequently, suspicious and captious; they are eager and hot about trifles, because trifles were, at first, their affairs of consequence. *Les manières nobles* imply exactly the reverse of all this. Study them early; you cannot make them too habitual and familiar to you.

# THE GRACES AND THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

LONDON, *November* 18, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

Examine yourself seriously why such and such people please and engage you more than such and such others of equal merit, and you will always find that it is because the former have the Graces and the latter not. I have known many a woman, with an exact shape and a symmetrical assemblage of beautiful features, please nobody; while others, with very moderate shapes and features, have charmed everybody. Why? — Because Venus will not charm so much without her attendant Graces as they will without her. Among men, how often have I seen the most solid merit and knowledge neglected, unwelcome, or even rejected, for want of them! While flimsy parts, little knowledge, and less merit, introduced by the Graces, have been received, cherished, and admired. Even virtue, which is moral beauty, wants some of its charms if unaccompanied by them.

If you ask me how you shall acquire what neither you nor I can define or ascertain, I can only answer, — *by observation.* Form yourself, with regard to others, upon what you feel pleases you in them. I can tell you the importance — the advantage of having the Graces; but I cannot give them you; I heartily

wish I could, and I certainly would; for I do not know a better present that I could make you.

To show you that a very wise, philosophical, and retired man thinks upon that subject as I do, who have always lived in the world, I send you, by Mr. Eliot, the famous Mr. Locke's book upon education, in which you will find the stress that he lays upon the Graces, which he calls (and very truly) good-breeding. I have marked all the parts of that book which are worth your attention; for, as he begins with the child, almost from its birth, the parts relative to its infancy would be useless to you. Germany is still less than England the seat of the Graces; however, you had as good not say so while you are there. But the place which you are going to in a great degree is; for I have known as many well-bred, pretty men come from Turin as from any part of Europe. The late King Victor Amedée took great pains to form such of his subjects as were of any consideration both to business and manners. The present King, I am told, follows his example; this, however, is certain, that in all Courts and Congresses where there are various foreign ministers, those of the King of Sardinia are generally the ablest, the politest, and *les plus déliés*. You will, therefore, at Turin, have very good models to form yourself upon; and remember, that with regard to the best models, as well as to the antique Greek statues in the print, *non mai a bastanza*. Observe every word, look, and motion of those who are allowed

to be the most accomplished persons there. Observe their natural and careless, but genteel air; their unembarrassed good-breeding; their unassuming, but yet unprostituted dignity. Mind their decent mirth, their discreet frankness, and that *entregent*, which, as much above the frivolous as below the important and the secret, is the proper medium for conversation in mixed companies. I will observe, by the bye, that the talent of that light *entregent* is often of great use to a foreign minister; not only as it helps him to domesticate himself in many families, but also as it enables him to put by and parry some subjects of conversation which might possibly lay him under difficulties — both what to say and how to look.

Of all the men that ever I knew in my life (and I knew him extremely well), the late Duke of Marlborough[1] possessed the Graces in the highest degree, not to say engrossed them; and, indeed, he got the most by them, for I will venture (contrary to the custom of profound historians, who always assign deep causes for great events) to ascribe the better half of the Duke of Marlborough's greatness and riches to those Graces. He was eminently illiterate; wrote bad English, and spelled it still worse. He had no share of what is commonly called *parts;* that is, he had no brightness, nothing shining in his genius. He had, most undoubtedly, an excellent good plain understanding, with sound judgment. But these alone

[1] Died 1722.

would probably have raised him but something higher than they found him, which was page to King James the Second's Queen. There the Graces protected and promoted him; for, while he was an Ensign of the Guards, the Duchess of Cleveland, then favourite mistress to King Charles the Second, struck by those very Graces, gave him five thousand pounds, with which he immediately bought an annuity for his life, of five hundred pounds a-year, of my grandfather, Halifax,[1] which was the foundation of his subsequent fortune. His figure was beautiful, but his manner was irresistible, by either man or woman. It was by this engaging, graceful manner, that he was enabled, during all his war, to connect the various and jarring powers of the Grand Alliance, and to carry them on to the main object of the war, notwithstanding their private and separate views, jealousies, and wrongheadednesses. Whatever Court he went to (and he was often obliged to go himself to some resty[2] and refractory ones), he as constantly prevailed, and brought them into his measures. The Pensionary Heinsius, a venerable old minister, grown grey in business, and who had governed the republic of the United Provinces for more than forty years, was absolutely governed by the Duke of Marlborough, as that republic

[1] George Savile, the celebrated Marquis of Halifax, born 1630, died 1695; he contributed to the restoration of Charles II., and tendered the Crown to William and Mary.

[2] *Resty*, hard to move; it occurs in Milton's prose.

feels to this day. He was always cool, and nobody ever observed the least variation in his countenance; he could refuse more gracefully than other people could grant; and those who went away from him the most dissatisfied as to the substance of their business, were yet personally charmed with him, and, in some degree, comforted by his manner. With all his gentleness and gracefulness, no man living was more conscious of his situation, nor maintained his dignity better.

With the share of knowledge which you have already gotten, and with the much greater which I hope you will soon acquire, what may you not expect to arrive at, if you join all these Graces to it! In your destination particularly, they are, in truth, half your business; for if you can once gain the affections, as well as the esteem, of the Prince or Minister of the Court to which you are sent, I will answer for it that will effectually do the business of the Court that sent you; otherwise it is up-hill work. Do not mistake, and think that these Graces, which I so often and so earnestly recommend to you, should only accompany important transactions, and be worn only *les jours de gala;* no, they should, if possible, accompany every the least thing that you do or say; for, if you neglect them in little things, they will leave you in great ones. I should, for instance, be extremely concerned to see you even drink a cup of coffee ungracefully, and slop yourself with it, by your awkward manner of holding

it; nor should I like to see your coat buttoned, or your shoes buckled awry. But I should be outrageous if I heard you mutter your words unintelligibly, stammer in your speech, or hesitate, misplace, and mistake in your narrations: and I should run away from you with greater rapidity, if possible, than I should now run to embrace you, if I found you destitute of all those Graces, which I have set my heart upon their making you one day, *omnibus ornatum excellere rebus.*

This subject is inexhaustible, as it extends to everything that is to be said or done; but I will leave it for the present, as this letter is already pretty long.

## ON DRESS

LONDON, *December* 30, O.S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,

I direct this letter to Berlin, where, I suppose, it will either find you, or, at least, wait but a very little time for you. I cannot help being anxious for your success, at this your first appearance upon the great stage of the world; for, though the spectators are always candid enough to give great allowances, and to show great indulgence to a new actor, yet, from the first impressions which he makes upon them, they are apt to decide, in their own minds, at least, whether he will ever be a good one or not. If he seems to understand what he says, by speaking it properly; if he is attentive to his part, instead of staring negligently

about; and if, upon the whole, he seems ambitious to please, they willingly pass over little awkwardnesses and inaccuracies, which they ascribe to a commendable modesty in a young and inexperienced actor. They pronounce that he will be a good one in time; and, by the encouragement which they give him, make him so the sooner. This, I hope, will be your case: you have sense enough to understand your part; a constant attention, and ambition to excel in it, with a careful observation of the best actors, will inevitably qualify you, if not for the first, at least for considerable parts.

Your dress (as insignificant a thing as dress is in itself) is now become an object worthy of some attention; for, I confess, I cannot help forming some opinion of a man's sense and character from his dress; and, I believe, most people do as well as myself. Any affectation whatsoever in dress, implies, in my mind, a flaw in the understanding. Most of our young fellows here display some character or other by their dress; some affect the tremendous, and wear a great and fiercely-cocked hat, an enormous sword, a short waistcoat, and a black cravat; these I should be almost tempted to swear the peace against, in my own defence, if I were not convinced that they are but meek asses in lions' skins. Others go in brown frocks, leather breeches, great oaken cudgels in their hands, their hats uncocked, and their hair unpowdered; and imitate grooms, stage-coachmen, and country bump-

kins so well in their outsides, that I do not make the least doubt of their resembling them equally in their insides. A man of sense carefully avoids any particular character in his dress; he is accurately clean for his own sake, but all the rest is for other people's. He dresses as well, and in the same manner, as the people of sense and fashion of the place where he is. If he dresses better, as he thinks, that is, more than they, he is a fop; if he dresses worse, he is unpardonably negligent: but of the two, I would rather have a young fellow too much than too little dressed; the excess on that side will wear off with a little age and reflection; but if he is negligent at twenty, he will be a sloven at forty, and stink at fifty years old. Dress yourselves fine where others are fine, and plain where others are plain; but take care always that your clothes are well made, and fit you, for otherwise they will give you a very awkward air. When you are once well dressed for the day, think no more of it afterwards; and, without any stiffness for fear of discomposing that dress, let all your motions be as easy and natural as if you had no clothes on at all. So much for dress, which I maintain to be a thing of consequence in the polite world.

## RATIONAL PLEASURE — PERSONAL EXPENSES

LONDON, *January* 10, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

Now that you are going a little more into the world, I will take this occasion to explain my intentions as to your future expenses, that you may know what you have to expect from me, and make your plan accordingly. I shall neither deny nor grudge you any money that may be necessary for either your improvement or your pleasures — I mean, the pleasures of a rational being. Under the head of improvement, I mean the best books and the best masters, cost what they will; I also mean, all the expense of lodgings, coach, dress, servants, etc., which, according to the several places where you may be, shall be respectively necessary to enable you to keep the best company. Under the head of rational pleasures, I comprehend — first, proper charities to real and compassionate objects of it; secondly, proper presents to those to whom you are obliged, or whom you desire to oblige; thirdly, a conformity of expense to that of the company which you keep — as in public spectacles, your share of little entertainments, a few pistoles at games of mere commerce, and other incidental calls of good company. The only two articles which I will never supply are — the profusion of low riot, and the idle lavishness of negligence and laziness.

A fool squanders away, without credit or advantage to himself, more than a man of sense spends with both. The latter employs his money as he does his time, and never spends a shilling of the one, nor a minute of the other, but in something that is either useful or rationally pleasing to himself or others; the former buys whatever he does not want, and does not pay for what he does want. He cannot withstand the charms of a toy-shop; snuff-boxes, watches, heads of canes, etc., are his destruction. His servants and tradesmen conspire with his own indolence to cheat him; and in a very little time he is astonished, in the midst of all the ridiculous superfluities, to find himself in want of all the real comforts and necessaries of life. Without care and method, the largest fortune will not — and with them, almost the smallest will — supply all necessary expenses. As far as you can possibly, pay ready money for everything you buy, and avoid bills. Pay that money, too, yourself, and not through the hands of any servant, who always either stipulates poundage, or requires a present for his good word, as they call it. Where you must have bills (as for meat and drink, clothes, etc.), pay them regularly every month, and with your own hand. Never, from a mistaken economy, buy a thing you do not want because it is cheap, or, from a silly pride, because it is dear. Keep an account in a book of all that you receive, and of all that you pay; for no man, who knows what he receives and what he pays, ever runs out. I do

not mean that you should keep an account of the shillings and half-crowns which you may spend in chair-hire, operas, etc.; they are unworthy of the time, and of the ink, that they would consume. Leave such *minuties* to dull, penny-wise fellows; but remember, in economy, as well as in every other part of life, to have the proper attention to proper objects, and the proper contempt for little ones.

## ON PREJUDICES — FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

LONDON, *February* 7, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

You are now come to an age capable of reflection, and I hope you will do, what, however, few people at your age do, exert it, for your own sake, in the search of truth and sound knowledge. I will confess (for I am not unwilling to discover my secrets to you) that it is not many years since I have presumed to reflect for myself. Till sixteen or seventeen, I had no reflection; and, for many years after that, I made no use of what I had. I adopted the notions of the books I read, or the company I kept, without examining whether they were just or not; and I rather chose to run the risk of easy error, than to take the time and trouble of investigating truth. Thus, partly from laziness, partly from dissipation, and partly from the *mauvaise honte* of rejecting fashionable notions, I was

(as I have since found) hurried away by prejudices, instead of being guided by reason; and quietly cherished error, instead of seeking for truth. But since I have taken the trouble of reasoning for myself, and have had the courage to own that I do so, you cannot imagine how much my notions of things are altered, and in how different a light I now see them, from that in which I formerly viewed them through the deceitful medium of prejudice or authority. Nay, I may possibly still retain many errors, which from long habit, have perhaps grown into real opinions; for it is very difficult to distinguish habits, early acquired and long entertained, from the result of our reason and reflection.

My first prejudice (for I do not mention the prejudices of boys and women, such as hobgoblins, ghosts, dreams, spilling salt, etc.) was my classical enthusiasm, which I received from the books I read, and the masters who explained them to me. I was convinced there had been no common sense nor common honesty in the world for these last fifteen hundred years; but that they were totally extinguished with the ancient Greek and Roman governments. Homer and Virgil could have no faults, because they were ancient; Milton and Tasso could have no merit, because they were modern. And I could almost have said, with regard to the ancients, what Cicero, very absurdly and unbecomingly for a philosopher, says with regard to Plato, *Cum quo errare malim quam cum aliis rectè sentire.* Whereas now, without any extraor-

dinary effort of genius, I have discovered that nature was the same three thousand years ago as it is at present; that men were but men then as well as now; that modes and customs vary often, but that human nature is always the same. And I can no more suppose, that men were better, braver, or wiser, fifteen hundred or three thousand years ago, than I can suppose that the animals or vegetables were better then than they are now.

I dare assert, too, in defiance of the favourers of the ancients, that Homer's hero, Achilles, was both a brute and a scoundrel, and, consequently, an improper character for the hero of an epic poem; he had so little regard for his country, that he would not act in defence of it because he had quarrelled with Agamemnon; and then, afterwards, animated by private resentment only, he went about killing people basely, I will call it, because he knew himself invulnerable; and yet, invulnerable as he was, he wore the strongest armour in the world; which I humbly apprehend to be a blunder, for a horse-shoe clapped to his vulnerable heel would have been sufficient. On the other hand, with submission to the favourers of the moderns, I assert, with Mr. Dryden, that the Devil is in truth the Hero of Milton's poem; his plan, which he lays, pursues, and at last executes, being the subject of the Poem. From all which considerations I impartially conclude, that the ancients had their excellences and their defects, their virtues and their vices, just like the

moderns; pedantry and affectation of learning decide clearly in favour of the former; vanity and ignorance, as peremptorily, in favour of the latter.

Religious prejudices kept pace with my classical ones; and there was a time when I thought it impossible for the honestest man in the world to be saved, out of the pale of the Church of England; not considering that matters of opinion do not depend upon the will; and that it is as natural, and as allowable, that another man should differ in opinion from me, as that I should differ from him; and that, if we are both sincere, we are both blameless, and should consequently have mutual indulgence for each other.

The next prejudices I adopted, were those of the *beau monde;* in which, as I was determined to shine, I took what are commonly called the genteel vices to be necessary. I had heard them reckoned so, and, without farther inquiry, I believed it; or, at least, should have been ashamed to have denied it, for fear of exposing myself to the ridicule of those whom I considered as the models of fine gentlemen. But I am now neither ashamed nor afraid to assert, that those genteel vices, as they are falsely called, are only so many blemishes in the character of even a man of the world, and what is called a fine gentleman, and degrade him in the opinions of those very people to whom he hopes to recommend himself by them. Nay, this prejudice often extends so far, that I have known people pretend to vices they had not, instead of carefully concealing those they had.

Use and assert your own reason; reflect, examine, and analyse everything, in order to form a sound and mature judgment; let no ουτος εφα impose upon your understanding, mislead your actions, or dictate your conversation. Be early what, if you are not, you will, when too late, wish you had been. Consult your reason betimes; I do not say that it will always prove an unerring guide, for human reason is not infallible; but it will prove the least erring guide that you can follow. Books and conversation may assist it; but adopt neither blindly and implicitly; try both by that best rule which God has given to direct us, — reason.

Of all the troubles, do not decline, as many people do, that of thinking. The herd of mankind can hardly be said to think; their notions are almost all adoptive; and, in general, I believe it is better that it should be so, as such common prejudices contribute more to order and quiet than their own separate reasonings would do, uncultivated and unimproved as they are. We have many of those useful prejudices in this country, which I should be very sorry to see removed. The good Protestant conviction, that the Pope is both Antichrist and the Whore of Babylon, is a more effectual preservative in this country against Popery than all the solid and unanswerable arguments of Chillingworth. The idle story of the Pretender's having been introduced in a warming-pan into the Queen's bed, though as destitute of all probability as of all foundation, has been much more prejudicial to the cause of

Jacobitism than all that Mr. Locke and others have written to show the unreasonableness and absurdity of the doctrines of indefeasible hereditary right and unlimited passive obedience. And that silly, sanguine notion, which is firmly entertained here, that one Englishman can beat three Frenchmen, encourages, and has sometimes enabled, one Englishman, in reality, to beat two.

A Frenchman ventures his life with alacrity *pour l'honneur du Roi;* were you to change the object which he has been taught to have in view, and tell him that it was *pour le bien de la patrie*, he would very probably run away. Such gross, local prejudices prevail with the herd of mankind, and do not impose upon cultivated, informed, and reflecting minds; but then there are notions equally false, though not so glaringly absurd, which are entertained by people of superior and improved understandings, merely for want of the necessary pains to investigate, the proper attention to examine, and the penetration requisite to determine the truth. Those are the prejudices which I would have you guard against by a manly exertion and attention of your reasoning faculty.

To mention one instance of a thousand that I could give you: It is a general prejudice, and has been propagated for these sixteen hundred years, that arts and sciences cannot flourish under an absolute government; and that genius must necessarily be cramped where freedom is restrained. This sounds plausible,

but is false in fact. Mechanic arts, as agriculture, manufactures, etc., will indeed be discouraged where the profits and property are, from the nature of the government, insecure. But why the despotism of a government should cramp the genius of a mathematician, an astronomer, a poet, or an orator, I confess I never could discover. It may indeed deprive the poet or the orator of the liberty of treating of certain subjects in the manner they would wish; but it leaves them subjects enough to exert genius upon, if they have it. Can an author with reason complain that he is cramped and shackled if he is not at liberty to publish blasphemy, bawdry, or sedition? all which are equally prohibited in the freest governments, if they are wise and well-regulated ones. This is the present general complaint of the French authors; but, indeed, chiefly of the bad ones. No wonder, say they, that England produces so many great geniuses; people there may think as they please, and publish what they think. Very true; but who hinders them from thinking as they please?

If, indeed, they think in a manner destructive of all religion, morality, or good manners, or to the disturbance of the state, an absolute government will certainly more effectually prohibit them from, or punish them for, publishing such thoughts than a free one could do. But how does that cramp the genius of an epic, dramatic, or lyric poet? Or how does it corrupt the eloquence of an orator, in the pulpit or at the bar?

The number of good French authors, such as Corneille, Racine, Moliere, Boileau, and La Fontaine, who seemed to dispute it with the Augustan age, flourished under the despotism of Louis XIV.; and the celebrated authors of the Augustan age did not shine till after the fetters were riveted upon the Roman people by that cruel and worthless Emperor. The revival of letters was not owing, either, to any free government, but to the encouragement and protection of Leo X. and Francis I. — the one as absolute a Pope, and the other as despotic a Prince, as ever reigned. Do not mistake, and imagine that, while I am only exposing a prejudice, I am speaking in favour of arbitrary power, which from my soul I abhor, and look upon as a gross and criminal violation of the natural rights of mankind. Adieu!

## ON DIGNITY OF MANNERS

LONDON, *August* 10, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

Let us resume our reflections upon men, their characters, their manners; in a word, our reflections upon the world. They may help you to form yourself and to know others. A knowledge very useful at all ages, very rare at yours; it seems as if it were nobody's business to communicate it to young men. Their masters teach them, singly, the languages or the sciences of their several departments; and are indeed generally

incapable of teaching them the world; their parents are often so too, or at least neglect doing it, either from avocations, indifference, or from an opinion that throwing them into the world (as they call it) is the best way of teaching it them. This last notion is in a great degree true; that is, the world can doubtless never be well known by theory; practice is absolutely necessary; but surely, it is of great use to a young man, before he sets out for that country, full of mazes, windings, and turnings, to have at least a general map of it, made by some experienced traveller.

There is a certain dignity of manners absolutely necessary, to make even the most valuable character either respected or respectable.

Horse-play, romping, frequent and loud fits of laughter, jokes, waggery, and indiscriminate familiarity, will sink both merit and knowledge into a degree of contempt. They compose at most a merry fellow; and a merry fellow was never yet a respectable man. Indiscriminate familiarity either offends your superiors, or else dubs you their dependant, and led captain. It gives your inferiors just, but troublesome and improper claims of equality. A joker is near akin to a buffoon; and neither of them is the least related to wit. Whoever is admitted or sought for in company, upon any other account than that of his merit and manners, is never respected there, but only made use of. We will have such-a-one, for he sings prettily; we will invite such-a-one to a ball, for he dances well; we will have

such-a-one at supper, for he is always joking and laughing; we will ask another, because he plays deep at all games, or because he can drink a great deal. These are all vilifying distinctions, mortifying preferences, and exclude all ideas of esteem and regard. Whoever *is had* (as it is called) in company for the sake of any one thing singly, is singly that thing, and will never be considered in any other light; consequently never respected, let his merits be what they will.

This dignity of manners, which I recommend so much to you, is not only as different from pride, as true courage is from blustering, or true wit from joking; but is absolutely inconsistent with it; for nothing vilifies and degrades more than pride. The pretensions of the proud man are oftener treated with sneer and contempt than with indignation; as we offer ridiculously too little to a tradesman who asks ridiculously too much for his goods, but we do not haggle with one who only asks a just and reasonable price.

Abject flattery and indiscriminate assentation degrade, as much as indiscriminate contradiction and noisy debate disgust. But a modest assertion of one's own opinion, and a complaisant acquiescence in other people's, preserve dignity.

Vulgar, low expressions, awkward motions and address, vilify; as they imply, either a very low turn of mind, or low education and low company.

Frivolous curiosity about trifles, and a laborious

attention to little objects, which neither require nor deserve a moment's thought, lower a man; who from thence is thought (and not unjustly) incapable of greater matters. Cardinal de Retz, very sagaciously, marked out Cardinal Chigi[1] for a little mind, from the moment that he told him he had wrote three years with the same pen, and that it was an excellent good one still.

A certain degree of exterior seriousness in looks and motions, gives dignity, without excluding wit and decent cheerfulness, which are always serious themselves. A constant smirk upon the face, and a whiffling activity of the body, are strong indications of futility. Whoever is in a hurry, shows that the thing he is about is too big for him. Haste and hurry are very different things.

I have only mentioned some of those things which may and do, in the opinion of the world, lower and sink characters in other respects valuable enough; but I have taken no notice of those that affect and sink the moral characters: they are sufficiently obvious. A man who has patiently been kicked may as well pretend to courage as a man blasted by vices and crimes may to dignity of any kind. But an exterior decency and dignity of manners will even keep such a man longer from sinking than otherwise he would be: of such consequence is the τὸ πρέπον, even though

[1] Elected Pope in April 1655, under the name of Alexander VII. See Letter CLVII., 28 Jan., 1751.

affected and put on! Pray read frequently and with the utmost attention; nay, get by heart, if you can, that incomparable chapter in Cicero's Offices upon the τὸ πρέπον, or the *Decorum*. It contains whatever is necessary for the dignity of manners.

In my next I will send you a general map of Courts; a region yet unexplored by you, but which you are one day to inhabit. The ways are generally crooked and full of turnings, sometimes strewed with flowers, sometimes choked up with briers; rotten ground and deep pits frequently lie concealed under a smooth and pleasing surface; all the paths are slippery, and every slip is dangerous. Sense and discretion must accompany you at your first setting out; but notwithstanding those, till experience is your guide, you will every now and then step out of your way or stumble.

Lady Chesterfield has just now received your German letter, for which she thanks you; she says the language is very correct, and I can plainly see the character is well formed, not to say better than your English character. Continue to write German frequently, that it may become quite familiar to you. Adieu!

## AWKWARDNESS — ABSENCE OF MIND — DRESS

LONDON, *September* 22, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

If I have faith in philters and love potions, I should suspect that you had given Sir Charles Williams some, by the manner in which he speaks of you, not only to me, but to everybody else. I will not repeat to you what he says of the extent and correctness of your knowledge, as it might either make you vain, or persuade you that you had already enough of what nobody can have too much. You will easily imagine how many questions I asked, and how narrowly I sifted him upon your subject; he answered me, and I dare say with truth, just as I could have wished; till, satisfied entirely with his accounts of your character and learning, I inquired into other matters, intrinsically indeed of less consequence, but still of great consequence to every man, and of more to you than to almost any man; I mean, your address, manners, and air. To these questions, the same truth which he had observed before, obliged him to give me much less satisfactory answers. And, as he thought himself, in friendship both to you and me, obliged to tell me the disagreeable as well as the agreeable truths, upon the same principle I think myself obliged to repeat them to you.

He told me, then, that in company you were fre-

quently most *provokingly* inattentive, absent, and *distrait.* That you came into a room, and presented yourself very awkwardly; that at table you constantly threw down knives, forks, napkins, bread, etc., and that you neglected your person and dress, to a degree unpardonable at any age, and much more so at yours.

These things, however immaterial soever they may seem to people who do not know the world and the nature of mankind, give me, who know them to be exceedingly material, very great concern. I have long distrusted you, and therefore frequently admonished you upon these articles; and I tell you plainly, that I shall not be easy till I hear a very different account of them. I know no one thing more offensive to a company, than that inattention and *distraction.* It is showing them the utmost contempt; and people never forgive contempt. No man is *distrait* with the man he fears, or the women he loves; which is a proof that every man can get the better of that *distraction* when he thinks it worth his while to do so; and, take my word for it, it is always worth his while. For my own part, I would rather be in company with a dead man than with an absent one; for if the dead man gives me no pleasure, at least he shows me no contempt; whereas the absent man, silently indeed, but very plainly, tells me that he does not think me worth his attention. Besides, can an absent man make any observations upon the characters, customs, and man-

ners of the company? No. He may be in the best companies all his lifetime (if they will admit him, which, if I were they, I would not), and never be one jot the wiser. I never will converse with an absent man; one may as well talk to a deaf one. It is, in truth, a practical blunder, to address ourselves to a man who we see plainly neither hears, minds, nor understands us. Moreover, I aver that no man is, in any degree, fit for either business or conversation, who cannot, and does not, direct and command his attention to the present object, be that what it will.

You know, by experience, that I grudge no expense in your education, but I will positively not keep you a flapper. You may read, in Dr. Swift, the description of these flappers, and the use they were to your friends the Laputans; whose minds (Gulliver says) are so taken up with intense speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the discourses of others, without being roused by some external action upon the organs of speech and hearing; for which reason, those people who are able to afford it, always keep a flapper in their family, as one of their domestics, nor ever walk about, or make visits, without him. This flapper is likewise employed diligently to attend his master in his walks, and, upon occasion, to give a soft flap upon his eyes; because he is always so wrapped up in cogitation, that he is in manifest danger of falling down every precipice, and bouncing his head against every post, and, in the streets, of jostling

others, or being jostled into the kennel himself. If *Christian* will undertake this province into the bargain, with all my heart; but I will not allow him any increase of wages upon that score.

In short, I give you fair warning, that when we meet, if you are absent in mind, I will soon be absent in body; for it will be impossible for me to stay in the room; and if at table you throw down your knife, plate, bread, etc., and hack the wing of a chicken for half an hour, without being able to cut it off, and your sleeve all the time in another dish, I must rise from table to escape the fever you would certainly give me. Good God! how I should be shocked if you came into my room, for the first time, with two left legs, presenting yourself with all the graces and dignity of a tailor, and your clothes hanging upon you like those in Monmouth Street, upon tenter-hooks! whereas I expect, nay require, to see you present yourself with the easy and genteel air of a man of fashion who has kept good company. I expect you not only well dressed, but very well dressed; I expect a gracefulness in all your motions, and something particularly engaging in your address. All this I expect, and all this it is in your power, by care and attention, to make me find; but, to tell you the plain truth, if I do not find it, we shall not converse very much together; for I cannot stand inattention and awkwardness; it would endanger my health.

You have often seen, and I have as often made you

observe, L(yttelton)'s[1] distinguished inattention and awkwardness. Wrapped up like a Laputan in intense thought, and possibly sometimes in no thought at all; which, I believe, is very often the case of absent people; he does not know his most intimate acquaintance by sight, or answers them as if they were at cross purposes. He leaves his hat in one room, his sword in another, and would leave his shoes in a third, if his buckles, though awry, did not save them; his legs and arms, by his awkward management of them, seem to have undergone the *question extraordinaire;* and his head, always hanging upon one or other of his shoulders, seems to have received the first stroke upon a block. I sincerely value and esteem him for his parts, learning, and virtue; but, for the soul of me, I cannot love him in company. This will be universally the case, in common life, of every inattentive, awkward man, let his real merit and knowledge be ever so great.

When I was of your age, I desired to shine, as far as I was able, in every part of life; and was as attentive to my manners, my dress, and my air, in company on evenings, as to my books and my tutor in the mornings. A young fellow should be ambitious to

[1] George, in 1757 created Lord, Lyttelton. His worth and his accomplishments, his extensive knowledge, and his unsullied probity, were never adorned by the Graces; he was a thoroughly practical man of much literary ability, and yet Horace Walpole says of him, that he had "the figure of a spectre, and the gesticulations of a puppet!" — (Memoirs of George II., vol. i., p. 175.)

shine in everything; and, of the two, always rather overdo than underdo. These things are by no means trifles; they are of infinite consequence to those who are to be thrown into the great world, and who would make a figure or a fortune in it. It is not sufficient to deserve well, one must please well too. Awkward, disagreeable merit, will never carry anybody far. Wherever you find a good dancing-master, pray let him put you upon your haunches; not so much for the sake of dancing, as for coming into a room and presenting yourself genteelly and gracefully. Women, whom you ought to endeavour to please, cannot forgive a vulgar and awkward air and gestures; *il leur faut du brillant.* The generality of men are pretty like them, and are equally taken by the same exterior graces.

I am very glad that you have received the diamond buckles safe: all I desire in return for them is, that they may be buckled even upon your feet, and that your stockings may not hide them. I should be sorry you were an egregious fop; but I protest that, of the two, I would rather have you a fop than a sloven. I think negligence in my own dress, even at my age, when certainly I expect no advantages from my dress, would be indecent with regard to others. I have done with fine clothes; but I will have my plain clothes fit me, and made like other people's. In the evenings I recommend to you the company of women of fashion, who have a right to attention, and will be

paid it. Their company will smooth your manners, and give you a habit of attention and respect; of which you will find the advantage among men.

My plan for you, from the beginning, has been to make you shine, equally in the learned and in the polite world; the former part is almost completed to my wishes, and will, I am persuaded, in a little time more, be quite so. The latter part is still in your power to complete; and I flatter myself that you will do it, or else the former part will avail you very little; especially in your department, where the exterior address and graces do half the business; they must be the harbingers of your merit, or your merit will be very coldly received: all can, and do, judge of the former, few of the latter.

Mr. Harte tells me that you have grown very much since your illness; if you get up to five feet ten, or even nine inches, your figure will, probably, be a good one; and, if well dressed and genteel, will probably please; which is a much greater advantage to a man than people commonly think. Lord Bacon calls it a letter of recommendation.

I would wish you to be the *omnis homo, l'homme universel.* You are nearer it, if you please, than ever anybody was at your age; and if you will but, for the course of this next year only, exert your whole attention to your studies in the morning, and to your address, manners, air, and *tournure* in the evenings, you will be the man I wish you, and the man that is rarely seen.

## VULGARISMS — AWKWARDNESS — THE MAN OF TASTE

LONDON, *September* 27, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

A vulgar, ordinary way of thinking, acting, or speaking, implies a low education, and a habit of low company. Young people contract it at school, or among servants, with whom they are too often used to converse; but, after they frequent good company, they must want attention and observation very much, if they do not lay it quite aside. And indeed, if they do not, good company will be very apt to lay them aside. The various kinds of vulgarisms are infinite; I cannot pretend to point them out to you; but I will give some samples, by which you may guess at the rest.

A vulgar man is captious and jealous; eager and impetuous about trifles. He suspects himself to be slighted, thinks everything that is said meant at him; if the company happens to laugh, he is persuaded they laugh at him; he grows angry and testy, says something very impertinent, and draws himself into a scrape, by showing what he calls a proper spirit, and asserting himself. A man of fashion does not suppose himself to be either the sole or principal object of the thoughts, looks, or words of the company; and never suspects that he is either slighted or laughed at, unless he is conscious that he deserves it. And if (which

very seldom happens) the company is absurd or ill-bred enough to do either, he does not care two-pence, unless the insult be so gross and plain as to require satisfaction of another kind. As he is above trifles, he is never vehement and eager about them; and, wherever they are concerned, rather acquiesces than wrangles. A vulgar man's conversation always savours strongly of the lowness of his education and company. It turns chiefly upon his domestic affairs, his servants, the excellent order he keeps in his own family, and the little anecdotes of the neighbourhood; all which he relates with emphasis, as interesting matters. He is a man gossip.

Vulgarism in language is the next, and distinguishing characteristic of bad company and a bad education. A man of fashion avoids nothing with more care than that. Proverbial expressions and trite sayings are the flowers of the rhetoric of a vulgar man. Would he say that men differ in their tastes; he both supports and adorns that opinion, by the good old saying, as he respectfully calls it, that *what is one man's Meat is another man's Poison.* If anybody attempts being *smart*, as he calls it, upon him, he gives them *Tit for Tat*, ay, that he does. He has always some favourite word for the time being; which, for the sake of using often, he commonly abuses: such as *vastly* angry, *vastly* kind, *vastly* handsome, and *vastly* ugly. Even his pronunciation of proper words carries the mark of the beast along with it. He calls the earth, *yearth;*

he is *obleiged*, not *obliged*, to you. He goes *to wards*, and not *towards*, such a place. He sometimes affects hard words by way of ornament, which he always mangles, like a learned woman. A man of fashion never has recourse to proverbs and vulgar aphorisms; uses neither favourite words nor hard words; but takes great care to speak very correctly and grammatically, and to pronounce properly; that is, according to the usage of the best companies.

An awkward address, ungraceful attitudes and actions, and a certain left-handiness (if I may use that word) loudly proclaim low education and low company; for it is impossible to suppose that a man can have frequented good company, without having catched something, at least, of their air and motions. A new-raised man is distinguished in a regiment by his awkwardness; but he must be impenetrably dull, if, in a month or two's time, he cannot perform at least the common manual exercise, and look like a soldier. The very accoutrements of a man of fashion are grievous incumbrances to a vulgar man. He is at a loss what to do with his hat, when it is not upon his head; his cane (if unfortunately he wears one) is at perpetual war with every cup of tea or coffee he drinks; destroys them first, and then accompanies them in their fall. His sword is formidable only to his own legs, which would possibly carry him fast enough out of the way of any sword but his own. His clothes fit him so ill, and constrain him so much, that he seems rather

their prisoner than their proprietor. He presents himself in company, like a criminal in a court of justice; his very air condemns him; and people of fashion will no more connect themselves with the one, than people of character will with the other. This repulse drives and sinks him into low company; a gulf from whence no man, after a certain age, ever emerged.

*Les manières nobles et aisées, la tournure d'un homme de condition, le ton de la bonne compagnie, les Graces, le je ne sçais quoi qui plait,* are as necessary to adorn and introduce your intrinsic merit and knowledge as the polish is to the diamond; which, without that polish, would never be worn, whatever it might weigh. Do not imagine that these accomplishments are only useful with women; they are much more so with men. In a public assembly, what an advantage has a graceful speaker, with genteel motions, a handsome figure, and a liberal air, over one who shall speak full as much good-sense, but destitute of these ornaments! In business, how prevalent are the Graces, how detrimental is the want of them! By the help of these I have known some men refuse favours less offensively than others granted them. The utility of them in Courts and negotiations is inconceivable. You gain the hearts, and consequently the secrets, of nine in ten that you have to do with, in spite even of their prudence; which will, nine times in ten, be the dupe of their hearts and of their senses. Consider the importance of these things as they deserve, and

you will not lose one moment in the pursuit of them.

You are travelling now in a country once so famous both for arts and arms, that (however degenerated at present) it still deserves your attention and reflection. View it, therefore, with care, compare its former with its present state, and examine into the causes of its rise and its decay. Consider it classically and politically, and do not run through it, as too many of your young countrymen do, musically, and (to use a ridiculous word) *knickknackically*. No piping nor fiddling, I beseech you; no days lost in poring upon almost imperceptible *Intaglios* and *Cameos;* and do not become a Virtuoso of small wares. Form a taste of painting, sculpture, and architecture, if you please, by a careful examination of the works of the best ancient and modern artists; those are liberal arts, and a real taste and knowledge of them become a man of fashion very well. But, beyond certain bounds, the man of taste ends, and the frivolous Virtuoso begins.

## GOOD-BREEDING

LONDON, *November* 3, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

From the time that you have had life, it has been the principal and favourite object of mine to make you as perfect as the imperfections of human nature will allow; in this view I have grudged no pains nor ex-

pense in your education; convinced that education, more than nature, is the cause of that great difference which we see in the characters of men. While you were a child, I endeavoured to form your heart habitually to virtue and honour, before your understanding was capable of showing you their beauty and utility. Those principles which you then got, like your grammar rules, only by rote, are now, I am persuaded, fixed and confirmed by reason. And indeed they are so plain and clear, that they require but a very moderate degree of understanding, either to comprehend or practise them.

Lord Shaftesbury says, very prettily, that he would be virtuous for his own sake, though nobody were to know it; as he would be clean for his own sake, though nobody were to see him. I have therefore, since you have had the use of your reason, never written to you upon those subjects; they speak best for themselves; and I should now just as soon think of warning you gravely not to fall into the dirt or the fire, as into dishonour or vice. This view of mine I consider as fully attained.

My next object was sound and useful learning. My own care first, Mr. Harte's afterwards, and *of late* (I will own it to your praise) your own application, have more than answered my expectations in that particular, and, I have reason to believe, will answer even my wishes. All that remains for me then to wish, to recommend, to inculcate, to order, and to insist upon,

is good-breeding; without which all your other qualifications will be lame, unadorned, and, to a certain degree, unavailing. And here I fear, and have too much reason to believe, that you are greatly deficient. The remainder of this letter, therefore, shall be (and it will not be the last by a great many) upon that subject.

A friend of yours and mine has very justly defined good-breeding to be, *the result of much good-sense, some good-nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others, and with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them.* Taking this for granted (as I think it cannot be disputed), it is astonishing to me that anybody who has good-sense and good-nature (and I believe you have both) can essentially fail in good-breeding. As to the modes of it, indeed, they vary according to persons, places, and circumstances, and are only to be acquired by observation and experience; but the substance of it is everywhere and eternally the same. Good manners are, to particular societies, what good morals are to society in general, — their cement and their security. And as laws are enacted to enforce good morals, or at least to prevent the ill effects of bad ones, so there are certain rules of civility, universally implied and received, to enforce good manners, and punish bad ones. And indeed there seems to me to be less difference, both between the crimes and punishments, than at first one would imagine. The immoral man, who invades another's

property, is justly hanged for it; and the ill-bred man, who by his ill manners invades and disturbs the quiet and comforts of private life, is by common consent as justly banished society. Mutual complaisances, attentions, and sacrifices of little conveniences, are as natural an implied compact between civilised people, as protection and obedience are between Kings and subjects; whoever in either case violates that compact, justly forfeits all advantages arising from it. For my own part, I really think, that, next to the consciousness of doing a good action, that of doing a civil one is the most pleasing; and the epithet which I should covet the most, next to that of Aristides, would be that of well-bred. Thus much for good-breeding in general; I will now consider some of the various modes and degrees of it.

Very few, scarcely any, are wanting in the respect which they should show to those whom they acknowledge to be infinitely their superiors; such as crowned heads, princes, and public persons of distinguished and eminent posts. It is the manner of showing that respect which is different. The man of fashion, and of the world, expresses it in its fullest extent; but naturally, easily, and without concern; whereas a man who is not used to keep good company, expresses it awkwardly; one sees that he is not used to it, and that it costs him a great deal; but I never saw the worst bred man living guilty of lolling, whistling, scratching his head, and such like indecencies, in company that

he respected. In such companies, therefore, the only point to be attended to is, to show that respect, which everybody means to show, in an easy, unembarrassed, and graceful manner. This is what observation and experience must teach you.

In mixed companies, whoever is admitted to make part of them, is, for the time at least, supposed to be upon a footing of equality with the rest; and, consequently, as there is no principal object of awe and respect, people are apt to take a greater latitude in their behaviour, and to be less upon their guard; and so they may, provided it be within certain bounds, which are upon no occasion to be transgressed. But, upon these occasions, though no one is entitled to distinguished marks of respect, every one claims and very justly, every mark of civility and good-breeding. Ease is allowed, but carelessness and negligence are strictly forbidden. If a man accosts you, and talks to you ever so dully or frivolously, it is worse than rudeness, it is brutality, to show him, by a manifest inattention to what he says, that you think him a fool or a blockhead, and not worth hearing. It is much more so with regard to women, who, of whatever rank they are, are entitled, in consideration of their sex, not only to an attentive, but an officious good-breeding from men. Their little wants, likings, dislikes, preferences, antipathies, fancies, whims, and even impertinences, must be officiously attended to, flattered, and, if possible, guessed at and anticipated by a well-bred man.

You must never usurp to yourself those conveniencies and *agrémens* which are of common right — such as the best places, the best dishes, etc.; but, on the contrary, always decline them yourself, and offer them to others, who, in their turns, will offer them to you; so that, upon the whole, you will in your turn enjoy your share of the common right. It would be useless for me to enumerate all the particular instances in which a well-bred man shows his good-breeding in good company; and it would be injurious to you to suppose that your own good-sense will not point them out to you; and then your own good-nature will recommend, and your self-interest enforce, the practice.

There is a third sort of good-breeding, in which people are the most apt to fail, from a very mistaken notion that they cannot fail at all; I mean, with regard to one's most familiar friends and acquaintances, or those who really are our inferiors; and there, undoubtedly, a greater degree of ease is not only allowed, but proper, and contributes much to the comforts of a private, social life. But that ease and freedom have their bounds too, which must by no means be violated. A certain degree of negligence and carelessness becomes injurious and insulting, from the real or supposed inferiority of the persons; and that delightful liberty of conversation among a few friends is soon destroyed, as liberty often has been, by being carried to licentiousness. But example explains things best, and I will put a pretty strong case.

Suppose you and me alone together — I believe you will allow that I have as good a right to unlimited freedom in your company, as either you or I can possibly have in any other; and I am apt to believe, too, that you would indulge me in that freedom as far as anybody would. But, notwithstanding this, do you imagine that I should think there were no bounds to that freedom? I assure you, I should not think so; and I take myself to be as much tied down by a certain degree of good manners to you, as by other degrees of them to other people. Were I to show you, by a manifest inattention to what you said to me, that I was thinking of something else the whole time — were I to yawn extremely or snore in your company, I should think that I behaved myself to you like a beast, and should not expect that you would care to frequent me. No. The most familiar and intimate habitudes, connections, and friendships, require a degree of good-breeding, both to preserve and cement them. If ever a man and his wife, who pass nights as well as days together, absolutely lay aside all good-breeding, their intimacy will soon degenerate into a coarse familiarity, infallibly productive of contempt or disgust. The best of us have our bad sides; and it is as imprudent as it is ill-bred to exhibit them. I shall certainly not use ceremony with you; it would be misplaced between us; but I shall certainly observe that degree of good-breeding with you, which is, in the first place, decent, and which, I am sure, is abso-

lutely necessary to make us like one another's company long.

I will say no more now upon this important subject of good-breeding, upon which I have already dwelt too long, it may be, for one letter, and upon which I shall frequently refresh your memory hereafter; but I will conclude with these axioms: —

That the deepest learning, without good-breeding, is unwelcome and tiresome pedantry, and of use nowhere but in a man's own closet — and, consequently, of little or no use at all.

That a man who is not perfectly well-bred, is unfit for good company, and unwelcome in it; will consequently dislike it, soon afterwards renounce it; and be reduced to solitude, or (what is worse) low and bad company.

That a man who is not well-bred, is full as unfit for business as for company.

Make then, my dear child, I conjure you, good-breeding the great object of your thoughts and actions, at least, half the day. Observe carefully the behaviour and manners of those who are distinguished by their good-breeding; imitate, nay, endeavour to excel, that you may at least reach them; and be convinced that good-breeding is, to all worldly qualifications, what charity is to all Christian virtues. Observe how it adorns merit, and how often it covets the want of it. May you wear it to adorn, and not to cover you! Adieu!

## GOOD-BREEDING (*Continued*)

LONDON, *November* 14, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

There is a natural good-breeding which occurs to every man of common sense, and is practised by every man of common good-nature. This good-breeding is general, independent of modes, and consists in endeavours to please and oblige our fellow-creatures by all good offices short of moral duties. This will be practised by a good-natured American savage as essentially as by the best bred European. But, then, I do not take it to extend to the sacrifice of our own conveniences for the sake of other people's. Utility introduced this sort of good-breeding as it introduced commerce, and established a truck[1] of the little *agrémens* and pleasures of life. I sacrifice such a conveniency to you, you sacrifice another to me; this commerce circulates, and every individual finds his account in it upon the whole. The third sort of good-breeding is local, and is variously modified, in not only different countries, but in different towns of the same country. But it must be founded upon the two former sorts: they are the matter to which, in this case, fashion and custom only give the different shapes and impressions. Whoever has the two first sorts will easily acquire this third sort of good-breeding, which depends singly upon attention and observation. It

[1] *Truck*, an old word for barter, exchange.

is, properly, the polish, the lustre, the last finishing strokes of good-breeding. It is to be found only in capitals, and even there it varies; the good-breeding of Rome differing in some things from that of Paris; that of Paris, in others, from that of Madrid; and that of Madrid, in many things from that of London.

A man of sense, therefore, carefully attends to the local manners of the respective places where he is, and takes for his models those persons whom he observes to be at the head of the fashion and good-breeding. He watches how they address themselves to their superiors, how they accost their equals, and how they treat their inferiors; and lets none of those little niceties escape him; which are to good-breeding what the last delicate and masterly touches are to a good picture; and of which the vulgar have no notion, but by which good judges distinguish the master. He attends even to their air, dress, and motions, and imitates them liberally, and not servilely; he copies, but does not mimic. These personal graces are of very great consequence: they anticipate the sentiments before merit can engage the understanding; they captivate the heart, and give rise, I believe, to the extravagant notions of charms and philters. Their effects were so surprising that they were reckoned supernatural. The most graceful and best bred men, and the handsomest and genteelest women, give the most philters; and, as I verily believe, without the least assistance of the devil. Pray be not only well-dressed,

but shining in your dress; let it have *du brillant;* I do not mean by a clumsy load of gold and silver, but by the taste and fashion of it. Women like and require it; they think it an attention due to them; but on the other hand, if your motions and carriage are not graceful, genteel, and natural, your fine clothes will only display your awkwardness the more.

But I am unwilling to suppose you still awkward; for surely by this time you must have catched a good air in good company. When you went from hence you were not naturally awkward; but your awkwardness was adventitious and Westmonasterial. Leipzig, I apprehend, is not the seat of the Graces; and I presume you acquired none there. But now, if you will be pleased to observe what people of the first fashion do with their legs and arms, heads and bodies, you will reduce yours to certain decent laws of motion. You danced pretty well here, and ought to dance very well before you come home; for what one is obliged to do sometimes one ought to be able to do well. Besides, *la belle danse donne du brillant à un jeune homme.* And you should endeavour to shine.

A calm serenity, negative merit and graces, do not become your age. You should be *alerte, adroit, vif;* be wanted, talked of, impatiently expected, and unwillingly parted with in company. I should be glad to hear half a dozen women of fashion say, *Où est donc le petit Stanhope? Que ne vient-il? Il faut avouer qu'il est aimable.* All this I do not mean singly with regard

to women as the principal object; but with regard to men, and with a view of your making yourself considerable. For, with very small variations, the same things that please women please men; and a man whose manners are softened and polished by women of fashion, and who is formed by them to an habitual attention and complaisance, will please, engage, and connect men much easier and more than he would otherwise. You must be sensible that you cannot rise in the world without forming connections and engaging different characters to conspire in your point. You must make them your dependents without their knowing it, and dictate to them while you seem to be directed by them. Those necessary connections can never be formed or preserved but by an uninterrupted series of complaisance, attentions, politeness, and some constraint. You must engage their hearts if you would have their support; you must watch the *mollia tempora*, and captivate them by the *agrémens*, and charms of conversation. People will not be called out to your service only when you want them; and, if you expect to receive strength from them, they must receive either pleasure or advantage from you.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD-BREEDING IN DIPLOMACY

DEAR BOY,

My last was upon the subject of good-breeding; but, I think, it rather set before you the unfitness and dis-

advantages of ill-breeding, than the utility and necessity of good; it was rather negative than positive. This, therefore, shall go further, and explain to you the necessity, which you, of all people living, lie under, not only of being positively actively well-bred, but of shining and distinguishing yourself by your good-breeding. Consider your own situation in every particular, and judge whether it is not essentially your interest, by your own good-breeding to others, to secure theirs to you; and that, let me assure you, is the only way of doing it; for people will repay, and with interest too, inattention with inattention, neglect with neglect, and ill manners with worse; which may engage you in very disagreeable affairs. In the next place, your profession requires, more than any other, the nicest and most distinguished good-breeding. You will negotiate with very little success, if you do not, previously, by your manners, conciliate and engage the affections of those with whom you are to negotiate. Can you ever get into the confidence and the secrets of the Courts where you may happen to reside, if you have not those pleasing, insinuating manners which alone can procure them? Upon my word, I do not say too much when I say, that superior good-breeding, insinuating manners, and genteel address, are half your business.

Your knowledge will have but very little influence upon the mind, if your manners prejudice the heart against you; but, on the other hand, how easily will you dupe the understanding where you have first engaged

the heart! and hearts are by no means to be gained by that mere common civility which everybody practises. Bowing again to those who bow to you, answering drily those who speak to you, and saying nothing offensive to anybody, is such negative good-breeding, that it is only not being a brute; as it would be but a very poor commendation of any man's cleanliness to say that he did not stink. It is an active, cheerful, officious, seducing good-breeding that must gain you the good-will and first sentiments of the men, and the affections of the women. You must carefully watch and attend to their passions, their tastes, their little humours and weaknesses, and *aller au devant.* You must do it, at the same time, with alacrity and *empressement*, and not as if you graciously condescended to humour their weaknesses.

For instance, suppose you invited anybody to dine or sup with you, you ought to recollect if you had observed that they had any favourite dish, and take care to provide it for them: and, when it came, you should say, *You seemed to me, at such and such a place, to give this dish a preference, and therefore I ordered it. This is the wine that I observed you liked, and therefore I procured some.* The more trifling these things are, the more they prove your attention for the person, and are consequently the more engaging. Consult your own breast, and recollect how these little attentions, when shown you by others, flatter that degree of self-love and vanity, from which no man living is

free. Reflect how they incline and attract you to that person, and how you are propitiated afterwards to all which that person says or does. The same causes will have the same effects in your favour.

Suppose (which is by no means improbable) that, at your return to England, I should place you near the person of some one of the Royal Family; in that situation, good-breeding, engaging address, adorned with all the graces that dwell at Courts, would very probably make you a favourite, and, from a favourite, a Minister; but all the knowledge and learning in the world, without them, never would. The penetration of Princes seldom goes deeper than the surface. It is the exterior that always engages their hearts; and I would never advise you to give yourself much trouble about their understandings. Princes in general (I mean those *Porphyrogenets*[1] who are born and bred in purple) are about the pitch of women; bred up like them, and are to be addressed and gained in the same manner. They always see, they seldom weigh. Your lustre, not your solidity, must take

[1] "In the Greek language *purple* and *porphyry* are the same word; and as the colours of nature are invariable, we may learn that a dark, deep red was the Tyrian dye which stained the purple of the ancients. An apartment of the Byzantine palace was lined with porphyry; it was reserved for the use of the pregnant Empresses, and the Royal birth of their children was expressed by the appellation of *Porphyrogenite*, or Born in the Purple. Several of the Roman princes had been blessed with an heir; but this peculiar surname was first applied to Constantine the Seventh" (A.D. 911).—Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. xlviii.

them; your inside will afterwards support and secure what your outside has acquired. With weak people (and they undoubtedly are three parts in four of mankind), good-breeding, address, and manners are everything; they can go no deeper; but let me assure you, that they are a great deal even with people of the best understandings.

Where the eyes are not pleased, and the heart is not flattered, the mind will be apt to stand out. Be this right or wrong, I confess I am so made myself. Awkwardness and ill-breeding shock me to that degree, that, where I meet with them, I cannot find in my heart to inquire into the intrinsic merit of that person; I hastily decide in myself, that he can have none; and am not sure, I should not even be sorry to know that he had any. I often paint you in my imagination in your present *lontananza;* and, while I view you in the light of ancient and modern learning, useful and ornamental knowledge, I am charmed with the prospect; but when I view you in another light, and represent you awkward, ungraceful, ill-bred, with vulgar air and manners, shambling towards me with inattention and *distractions*, I shall not pretend to describe to you what I feel; but will do as a skilful painter did formerly, draw a veil before the countenance of the father.

I dare say you know already enough of Architecture to know that the Tuscan is the strongest and most solid of all the Orders; but, at the same time,

it is the coarsest and clumsiest of them. Its solidity does extremely well for the foundation and base floor of a great edifice; but if the whole building be Tuscan, it will attract no eyes, it will stop no passengers, it will invite no interior examination; people will take it for granted, that the finishing and furnishing cannot be worth seeing, where the front is so unadorned and clumsy. But if, upon the solid Tuscan foundation, the Doric, the Ionic, and the Corinthian Orders rise gradually with all their beauty, proportions, and ornaments, the fabric seizes the most incurious eye, and stops the most careless passenger, who solicits admission as a favour, nay, often purchases it. Just so will it fare with your little fabric, which, at present, I fear, has more of the Tuscan than of the Corinthian Order. You must absolutely change the whole front, or nobody will knock at the door. The several parts, which must compose this new front, are elegant, easy, natural, superior good-breeding; an engaging address; genteel motions; an insinuating softness in your looks, words, and actions; a spruce, lively air; fashionable dress; and all the glitter that a young fellow should have.

I am sure you would do a great deal for my sake; and therefore consider, at your return here, what a disappointment and concern it would be to me, if I could not safely depute you to do the honours of my house and table; and if I should be ashamed to present you to those who frequent both. Should you be awkward, inattentive, and *distrait*, and happen to meet

Mr. L(yttleton)[1] at my table, the consequences of that meeting must be fatal; you would run your heads against each other, cut each other's fingers, instead of your meat, or die by the precipitate infusion of scalding soup.

This is really so copious a subject, that there is no end of being either serious or ludicrous upon it. It is impossible, too, to enumerate or state to you the various cases in good-breeding; they are infinite; there is no situation or relation in the world, so remote or so intimate, that does not require a degree of it. Your own good-sense must point it out to you; your own good-nature must incline, and your interest prompt you to practise it; and observation and experience must give you the manner, the air, and the graces, which complete the whole.

I have often asserted, that the profoundest learning, and the politest manners, were by no means incompatible, though so seldom found united in the same person; and I have engaged myself to exhibit you as a proof of the truth of this assertion. Should you, instead of that, happen to disprove me, the concern indeed will be mine, but the loss will be yours. Lord Bolingbroke[2] is a strong instance on my side of the question; he joins, to the deepest erudition, the most elegant politeness and good-breeding that ever any courtier and man of the world was adorned with.

[1] See page 139.

[2] Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, born 1672, died 1751.

And Pope very justly called him "all-accomplished St. John," with regard to his knowledge and his manners. He had, it is true, his faults; which proceeded from unbounded ambition, and impetuous passions; but they have now subsided by age and experience; and I can wish you nothing better than to be what he is now, without being what he has been formerly. His address pre-engages, his eloquence persuades, and his knowledge informs all who approach him. Upon the whole, I do desire, and insist, that, from after dinner till you go to bed, you make good-breeding, address, and manners, your serious object and your only care. Without them, you will be nobody; with them, you may be anything.

Adieu, my dear child! My compliments to Mr. Harte.

## ON STYLE

LONDON, *November* 24, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

I have written to you so often of late upon good-breeding, address, *les manières liantes*, the Graces, etc., that I shall confine this letter to another subject, pretty near akin to them, and which, I am sure, you are full as deficient in — I mean style.

Style is the dress of thoughts; and let them be ever so just, if your style is homely, coarse, and vulgar, they will appear to as much disadvantage, and be as ill received as your person, though ever so well propor-

tioned, would, if dressed in rags, dirt, and tatters. It is not every understanding that can judge of matter, but every ear can and does judge, more or less, of style; and were I either to speak or write to the public, I should prefer moderate matter, adorned with all the beauties and elegances of style, to the strongest matter in the world, ill-worded and ill-delivered. Your business is negotiation abroad, and oratory in the House of Commons at home. What figure can you make in either case, if your style be inelegant, I do not say bad? Imagine yourself writing an office-letter to a Secretary of State, which letter is to be read by the whole Cabinet Council, and very possibly afterwards laid before Parliament; any one barbarism, solecism, or vulgarism in it would, in a very few days, circulate through the whole kingdom, to your disgrace and ridicule. For instance; I will suppose you had written the following letter from the Hague, to the Secretary of State at London; and leave you to suppose the consequences of it.

My Lord,

I *had*, last night, the honour of your Lordship's letter of the 24th; and will *set about doing* the orders contained *therein;* and *if so be* that I can get that affair done by the next post, I will not fail *for to* give your Lordship an account of it by *next post.* I have told the French Minister, *as how, that if* that affair be not soon concluded, your Lordship would think it *all*

*long of him;* and that he must have neglected *for to* have wrote to his Court about it. I must beg leave to put your Lordship in mind, *as how*, that I am now full three quarters in arrear; and if *so be* that I do not very soon receive at least one half year, I shall *cut a very bad figure;* for *this here* place is very dear. I shall be *vastly beholden* to your Lordship for *that there* mark of your favour; and so I *rest*, or *remain*, Your etc.

You will tell me, possibly, that this is a *caricatura* of an illiberal and inelegant style; I will admit it; but assure you, at the same time, that a despatch with less than half these faults would blow you up for ever. It is by no means sufficient to be free from faults in speaking and writing; you must do both correctly and elegantly. In faults of this kind, it is not *ille optimus qui minimis urgetur;* but he is unpardonable who has any at all, because it is his own fault; he need only attend to, observe, and imitate the best authors.

It is a very true saying, that a man must be born a poet, but that he may make himself an orator; and the very first principle of an orator is, to speak his own language particularly, with the utmost purity and elegancy. A man will be forgiven, even great errors, in a foreign language; but in his own, even the least slips are justly laid hold of and ridiculed.

A person of the House of Commons, speaking two years ago upon naval affairs, asserted, that we had

then the finest navy *upon the face of the yearth.* This happy mixture of blunder and vulgarism, you may easily imagine, was matter of immediate ridicule; but I can assure you, that it continues so still, and will be remembered as long as he lives and speaks. Another, speaking in defence of a gentleman, upon whom a censure was moved, happily said, that he thought that gentleman was more *liable* to be thanked and rewarded, than censured. You know, I presume, that *liable* can never be used in a good sense.

You have with you three or four of the best English authors, Dryden, Atterbury, and Swift: read them with the utmost care, and with a particular view to their language; and they may possibly correct that *curious infelicity of diction* which you acquired at Westminster. Mr. Harte excepted, I will admit that you have met with very few English abroad, who could improve your style; and with many, I dare say, who speak as ill as yourself, and it may be worse; you must, therefore, take the more pains, and consult your authors, and Mr. Harte, the more. I need not tell you how attentive the Romans and Greeks, particularly the Athenians, were to this object. It is also a study among the Italians and the French; witness their respective academies and dictionaries, for improving and fixing their languages. To our shame be it spoken, it is less attended to here than in any polite country; but that is no reason why you should not attend to it; on the contrary, it will distinguish

you the more. Cicero says, very truly, that it is glorious to excel other men in that very article, in which men excel brutes; *speech.*

Constant experience has shown me, that great purity and elegance of style, with a graceful elocution, cover a multitude of faults, in either a speaker or a writer. For my own part, I confess (and I believe most people are of my mind) that if a speaker should ungracefully mutter or stammer out to me the sense of an angel, deformed by barbarisms and solecisms, or larded with vulgarisms, he should never speak to me a second time, if I could help it. Gain the heart, or you gain nothing; the eyes and the ears are the only roads to the heart. Merit and knowledge will not gain hearts, though they will secure them when gained. Pray have that truth ever in your mind. Engage the eyes by your address, air, and motions; soothe the ears, by the elegancy and harmony of your diction; the heart will certainly follow; and the whole man, or woman, will as certainly follow the heart. I must repeat it to you, over and over again, that, with all the knowledge which you may have at present, or hereafter acquire, and with all the merit that ever man had, if you have not a graceful address, liberal and engaging manners, a prepossessing air, and a good degree of eloquence in speaking and writing, you will be nobody; but will have the daily mortification of seeing people, with not one-tenth part of your merit or knowledge, get the start of you, and disgrace you both in company and in business.

You have read Quintilian; the best book in the world to form an orator; pray read *Cicero de Oratore;* the best book in the world to finish one. Translate and retranslate, from and to Latin, Greek, and English; make yourself a pure and elegant English style; it requires nothing but application. I do not find that God has made you a poet; and I am very glad that he has not; therefore, for God's sake, make yourself an orator, which you may do. Though I still call you boy, I consider you no longer as such; and when I reflect upon the prodigious quantity of manure that has been laid upon you, I expect you should produce more at eighteen, than uncultivated soils do at eight-and-twenty.

Pray tell Mr. Harte I have received his letter of the 13th, N.S. Mr. Smith was much in the right, not to let you go, at this time of the year, by sea; in the summer you may navigate as much as you please; as for example; from Leghorn to Genoa, etc. Adieu!

## ON RIDICULE

LONDON, *November* 26, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

People in general will much better bear being told of their vices or crimes than of their little failings and weaknesses. They, in some degree, justify or excuse (as they think) the former, by strong passions, seduction, and artifices of others; but to be told of, or to

confess, their little failings and weaknesses, implies an inferiority of parts too mortifying to that self-love and vanity which are inseparable from our natures. I have been intimate enough with several people to tell them that they had said or done a very criminal thing; but I never was intimate enough with any man to tell him, very seriously, that he had said or done a very foolish one. Nothing less than the relation between you and me can possibly authorise that freedom; but, fortunately for you, my parental rights, joined to my censorial powers, give it me in its fullest extent, and my concern for you will make me exert it. Rejoice, therefore, that there is one person in the world who can and will tell you what will be very useful to you to know, and yet what no other man living could or would tell you. Whatever I shall tell you of this kind, you are very sure, can have no other motive than your interest. I can neither be jealous nor envious of your reputation or your fortune, which I must be both desirous and proud to establish and promote: I cannot be your rival, either in love or in business; on the contrary, I want the rays of your rising to reflect new lustre upon my setting light. In order to this, I shall analyse you minutely, and censure you freely, that you may not (if possible) have one single spot when in your meridian.

There is nothing that a young fellow, at his first appearance in the world, has more reason to dread, and, consequently, should take more pains to avoid,

than having any ridicule fixed upon him. It degrades him with the most reasonable part of mankind, but it ruins him with the rest; and I have known many a man undone by acquiring a ridiculous nick-name; I would not, for all the riches in the world, that you should acquire one when you return to England. Vices and crimes excite hatred and reproach; failings, weaknesses, and awkwardnesses excite ridicule; they are laid hold of by mimics, who, though very contemptible wretches themselves, often, by their buffoonery, fix ridicule upon their betters. The little defects in manners, elocution, address, and air (and even of figure, though very unjustly), are the objects of ridicule, and the causes of nick-names. You cannot imagine the grief it would give me, and the prejudice it would do you, if by way of distinguishing you from others of your name, you should happen to be called Muttering Stanhope, Absent Stanhope, Ill-bred Stanhope, or Awkward, Left-legged Stanhope; therefore, take great care to put it out of the power of Ridicule itself to give you any of these ridiculous epithets; for, if you get one, it will stick to you like the envenomed shirt.

## GREAT EVENTS FROM LITTLE CAUSES—PUBLIC SPEAKING

LONDON, *December* 5, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

Those who suppose that men in general act rationally because they are called rational creatures, know

very little of the world; and, if they act themselves upon that supposition, will, nine times in ten, find themselves grossly mistaken. That man is *animal bipes, implume, risibile,* I entirely agree; but, for the *rationale,* I can only allow it him *in actu primo* (to talk logic), and seldom *in actu secundo.* Thus the speculative cloistered pedant in his solitary cell forms systems of things as they should be, not as they are; and writes as decisively and absurdly upon war, politics, manners, and characters, as that pedant talked who was so kind as to instruct Hannibal in the art of war. Such closet politicians never fail to assign the deepest motives for the most trifling actions, instead of often ascribing the greatest actions to the most trifling causes, in which they would be much seldomer mistaken. They read and write of Kings, heroes, and statesmen, as never doing anything but upon the deepest principles of sound policy. But those who see and observe Kings, heroes, and statesmen, discover that they have headaches, indigestions, humours, and passions, just like other people; every one of which in their turns determine their wills in defiance of their reason.

Had we only read in the Life of Alexander that he burnt Persepolis, it would doubtless have been accounted for from deep policy: we should have been told, that his new conquest could not have been secured without the destruction of that capital, which would have been the constant seat of cabals, conspira-

cies, and revolts. But, luckily, we are informed at the same time, that this hero, this demi-god, this son and heir of Jupiter Ammon, happened to get extremely drunk . . . and, by way of frolic, destroyed one of the finest cities in the world.

Read men, therefore, yourself; not in books, but in nature. Adopt no systems, but study them yourself. Observe their weaknesses, their passions, their humours; of all which their understandings are, nine times in ten, the dupes. You will then know that they are to be gained, influenced or led, much oftener by little things than by great ones; and consequently you will no longer think those things little which tend to such great purposes.

Let us apply this now to the particular object of this letter; I mean, speaking in and influencing public assemblies. The nature of our constitution makes eloquence more useful and more necessary in this country than in any other in Europe. A certain degree of good-sense and knowledge is requisite for that as well as for everything else; but beyond that, the purity of diction, the elegance of style, the harmony of periods, a pleasing elocution, and a graceful action, are the things which a public speaker should attend to the most; because his audience certainly does, and understands them the best: or rather, indeed, understands little else. The late Lord Chancellor Cowper's strength, as an orator, lay by no means in his reasonings, for he often hazarded very weak ones. But such

was the purity and elegance of his style, such the propriety and charms of his elocution, and such the gracefulness of his action, that he never spoke without universal applause: the ears and the eyes gave him up the hearts and the understandings of the audience. On the contrary, the late Lord Townshend[1] always spoke materially, with argument and knowledge, but never pleased. Why? His diction was not only inelegant, but frequently ungrammatical, always vulgar; his cadences false, his voice unharmonious, and his action ungraceful. Nobody heard him with patience; and the young fellows used to joke upon him, and repeat his inaccuracies. The late Duke of Argyle,[2] though the weakest reasoner, was the most pleasing speaker I ever knew in my life; he charmed, he warmed, he forcibly ravished the audience, not by his matter certainly, but by his manner of delivering it. A most genteel figure, a graceful noble air, an harmonious voice, an elegancy of style, and a strength of emphasis, conspired to make him the most affecting, persuasive, and applauded speaker I ever saw. I was captivated like others, but when I came home and coolly considered what he had said, stripped of all those ornaments in which he had dressed it, I often

[1] Charles, second Viscount Townshend, born 1676, was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1717.

[2] John, the second and celebrated Duke, of whom Thomson says: —

from his rich tongue
Persuasion flows and wins the high debate.

found the matter flimsy, the arguments weak, and I was convinced of the power of those adventitious, concurring circumstances, which ignorance of mankind only calls trifling ones. Cicero in his book *de Oratore*, in order to raise the dignity of that profession which he well knew himself to be at the head of, asserts that a complete orator must be a complete everything, lawyer, philosopher, divine, etc. That would be extremely well, if it were possible, but man's life is not long enough; and I hold him to be the completest orator who speaks the best upon that subject which occurs; whose happy choice of words, whose lively imagination, whose elocution and action adorn and grace his matter, at the same time that they excite the attention and engage the passions of his audience.

You will be of the House of Commons as soon as you are of age; and you must first make a figure there, if you would make a figure, or a fortune, in your country. This you can never do without that correctness and elegancy in your own language, which you now seem to neglect, and which you have entirely to learn. Fortunately for you, it is to be learned. Care and observation will do it; but do not flatter yourself, that all the knowledge, sense, and reasoning in the world will ever make you a popular and applauded speaker, without the ornaments and the graces of style, elocution, and action. Sense and argument, though coarsely delivered, will have their weight in a private conversation, with two or three

people of sense; but in a public assembly they will have none, if naked and destitute of the advantages I have mentioned. Cardinal de Retz observes, very justly, that every numerous assembly is mob, influenced by their passions, humours, and affections, which nothing but eloquence ever did, or ever can engage. This is so important a consideration for everybody in this country, and more particularly for you, that I earnestly recommend it to your most serious care and attention.

Mind your diction, in whatever language you either write or speak; contract a habit of correctness and elegance. Consider your style, even in the freest conversation, and most familiar letters. After, at least, if not before you have said a thing, reflect if you could not have said it better. Where you doubt of the propriety or elegancy of a word or a phrase, consult some good dead or living authority in that language. Use yourself to translate from various languages into English; correct those translations till they satisfy your ear, as well as your understanding. And be convinced of this truth, That the best sense and reason in the world will be as unwelcome in a public assembly, without these ornaments, as they will in public companies, without the assistance of manners and politeness. If you will please people, you must please them in their own way; and as you cannot make them what they should be, you must take them as they are. I repeat it again, they are only to

be taken by *agrémens*, and by what flatters their senses and their hearts. Rabelais first wrote a most excellent book, which nobody liked; then, determined to conform to the public taste, he wrote *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, which everybody liked, extravagant as it was. Adieu!

## PUBLIC SPEAKING (*Continued*)

LONDON, *December* 9, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

It is now above forty years since I have never spoken nor written one single word, without giving myself at least one moment's time to consider, whether it was a good one or a bad one, and whether I could not find out a better in its place. An unharmonious and rugged period, at this time, shocks my ears; and I, like all the rest of the world, will willingly exchange, and give up some degree of rough sense, for a good degree of pleasing sound. I will freely and truly own to you, without either vanity or false modesty, that whatever reputation I have acquired as a speaker, is more owing to my constant attention to my diction, than to my matter, which was necessarily just the same as other people's. When you come into Parliament, your reputation as a speaker will depend much more upon your words, and your periods, than upon the subject. The same matter occurs equally to everybody of common sense, upon the same question; the

dressing it well, is what excites the attention and admiration of the audience.

It is in Parliament that I have set my heart upon your making a figure; it is there that I want to have you justly proud of yourself, and to make me justly proud of you. This means that you must be a good speaker there; I use the word *must*, because I know you may if you will. The vulgar, who are always mistaken, look upon a speaker and a comet with the same astonishment and admiration, taking them both for preternatural phenomena. This error discourages many young men from attempting that character; and good speakers are willing to have their talent considered as something very extraordinary, if not a peculiar gift of God to His elect. But let you and I [*sic*] analyse and simplify this good speaker; let us strip him of those adventitious plumes, with which his own pride, and the ignorance of others have decked him, and we shall find the true definition of him to be no more than this: — A man of good common sense, who reasons justly, and expresses himself elegantly on that subject upon which he speaks. There is, surely, no witchcraft in this. A man of sense, without a superior and astonishing degree of parts, will not talk nonsense upon any subject; nor will he, if he has the least taste or application, talk inelegantly. What then does all this mighty art and mystery of speaking in Parliament amount to? Why, no more than this, That the man who speaks in the House of Commons, speaks in that

House, and to four hundred people, that opinion, upon a given subject, which he would make no difficulty of speaking in any house in England, round the fire, or at table, to any fourteen people whatsoever; better judges, perhaps, and severer critics of what he says, than any fourteen gentlemen of the House of Commons.

I have spoken frequently in Parliament, and not always without some applause; and therefore I can assure you, from my experience, that there is very little in it. The elegancy of the style, and the turn of the periods, make the chief impression upon the hearers. Give them but one or two round and harmonious periods in a speech, which they will retain and repeat, and they will go home as well satisfied, as people do from an opera, humming all the way one or two favourite tunes that have struck their ears and were easily caught. Most people have ears, but few have judgment; tickle those ears, and, depend upon it, you will catch their judgments, such as they are.

Cicero, conscious that he was at the top of his profession (for in his time Eloquence was a profession), in order to set himself off, defines, in his Treatise *de Oratore*, an Orator to be such a man as never was, or never will be; and by this fallacious argument, says, that he must know every art and science whatsoever, or how shall he speak upon them? But with submission to so great an authority, my definition of an Orator is extremely different from, and, I believe, much truer than, his. I call that man an Orator, who

reasons justly, and expresses himself elegantly upon whatever subject he treats. Problems in Geometry, Equations in Algebra, Processes in Chymistry, and Experiments in Anatomy, are never, that I have heard of, the objects of Eloquence; and therefore I humbly conceive, that a man may be a very fine speaker, and yet know nothing of Geometry, Algebra, Chymistry, or Anatomy. The subjects of all Parliamentary debates, are subjects of common sense singly.

Thus I write whatever occurs to me, that I may contribute either to form or inform you. May my labour not be in vain! and it will not, if you will but have half the concern for yourself, that I have for you.

Adieu!

## PUBLIC SPEAKING (*Continued*)

LONDON, *December* 12, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

Lord Clarendon, in his History, says of Mr. John Hampden, *that he had a head to contrive, a tongue to persuade, and a hand to execute, any mischief.* I shall not now enter into the justness of this character of Mr. Hampden, to whose brave stand against the illegal demand of Shipmoney, we owe our present liberties; but I mention it to you as the character, which, with the alteration of one single word, *Good*, instead of *Mischief*, I would have you aspire to, and use your utmost endeavours to deserve. The head to

contrive, God must to a certain degree have given you; but it is in your own power greatly to improve it, by study, observation, and reflection. As for the *tongue to persuade*, it wholly depends upon yourself; and without it the best head will contrive to very little purpose. The hand to execute, depends likewise, in my opinion, in a great measure upon yourself. Serious reflection will always give courage in a good cause; and the courage arising from reflection is of a much superior nature to the animal and constitutional courage of a foot-soldier. The former is steady and unshaken, where the *nodus* is *dignus vindice;* the latter is oftener improperly than properly exerted, but always brutally.

The second member of my text (to speak ecclesiastically) shall be the subject of my following discourse; *the tongue to persuade.* As judicious Preachers recommend those virtues, which they think their several audiences want the most: such as truth and continence, at Court; disinterestedness, in the City; and sobriety in the Country.

You must certainly, in the course of your little experience, have felt the different effects of elegant and inelegant speaking. Do you not suffer, when people accost you in a stammering or hesitating manner; in an untuneful voice, with false accents and cadences;[1] puzzling and blundering through solecisms,

[1] It may be observed, however, that the questions of what are "false accents and cadences" in our language, appear to have been

barbarisms, and vulgarisms; mis-placing even their bad words, and inverting all method? Does not this prejudice you against their matter, be it what it will? nay, even against their persons? I am sure it does me. On the other hand, Do you not feel yourself inclined, prepossessed, nay, even engaged in favour of those who address you in the direct contrary manner? The effects of a correct and adorned style, of method and perspicuity, are incredible towards persuasion; they often supply the want of reason and argument; but when used in the support of reason and argument, they are irresistible. The French attend very much to the purity and elegancy of their style, even in common conversation; insomuch, that it is a character to say of a man, *qu'il narre bien.* Their conversations frequently turn upon the delicaciès of their language, and an Academy is employed in fixing it. The *Crusca*, in Italy, has the same object; and I have met with very few Italians, who did not speak their own language correctly and elegantly. How much more necessary is it for an Englishman to do so, who

far less settled in Lord Chesterfield's time than at present. Dr. Johnson says: "When I published the plan for my dictionary, Lord Chesterfield told me that the word *great* should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *state*, and Sir William Yonge sent me word, that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *seat*, and that none but an Irishman would pronounce it *grait*. Now here were two men of the highest rank — the one the best speaker in the House of Lords, the other the best speaker in the House of Commons — differing entirely." — Boswell's *Life*, Notes of March 27, 1772. — M.

is to speak it in a public assembly, where the laws and liberties of his country are the subjects of his deliberation? The tongue that would persuade, there, must not content itself with mere articulation. You know what pains Demosthenes took to correct his naturally bad elocution; you know that he declaimed by the sea-side in storms, to prepare himself for the noise of the tumultuous assemblies he was to speak to; and you can now judge of the correctness and elegancy of his style. He thought all these things of consequence, and he thought right; pray do you think so too. It is of the utmost consequence to you to be of that opinion. If you have the least defect in your elocution, take the utmost care and pains to correct it. Do not neglect your style, whatever language you speak in, or whomever you speak to, were it your footman. Seek always for the best words and the happiest expressions you can find. Do not content yourself with being barely understood; but adorn your thoughts, and dress them as you would your person; which, however well proportioned it might be, it would be very improper and indecent to exhibit naked, or even worse dressed than people of your sort are.

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In your destination, you will have frequent occasions to speak in public; to Princes and States abroad; to the House of Commons, at home; judge then, whether Eloquence is necessary for you or not; not only com-

mon Eloquence, which is rather free from faults, than adorned by beauties; but the highest, the most shining degree of Eloquence. For God's sake, have this object always in your view, and in your thoughts. Tune your tongue early to persuasion; and let no jarring, dissonant accents ever fall from it. Contract an habit of speaking well, upon every occasion, and neglect yourself in no one. Eloquence and good breeding, alone, with an exceeding small degree of parts and knowledge, will carry a man a great way; with your parts and knowledge, then, how far will they not carry you? Adieu!

## INCONSISTENCY — RASH FRIENDSHIPS

LONDON, *December* 19, O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

The knowledge of mankind is a very useful knowledge for everybody — a most necessary one for you, who are destined to an active public life. You will have to do with all sorts of characters; you should, therefore, know them thoroughly in order to manage them ably. This knowledge is not to be gotten systematically, you must acquire it yourself by your own observation and sagacity: I will give you such hints as I think may be useful landmarks in your intended progress.

I have often told you (and it is most true) that, with regard to mankind, we must not draw general conclu-

sions from certain particular principles, though, in the main, true ones. We must not suppose, that because a man is a rational animal, he will, therefore, always act rationally; or, because he has such or such a predominant passion, that he will act invariably and consequentially in the pursuit of it. No; we are complicated machines; and though we have one main-spring that gives motion to the whole, we have an infinity of little wheels, which, in their turns, retard, precipitate, and sometimes stop that motion.

There are two inconsistent passions, which, however, frequently accompany each other, like man and wife; and which, like man and wife too, are commonly clogs upon each other. I mean ambition and avarice: the latter is often the true cause of the former; and then is the predominant passion. It seems to have been so in Cardinal Mazarin; who did anything, submitted to anything, and forgave anything, for the sake of plunder. He loved and courted power like an usurer, because it carried profit along with it. Whoever should have formed his opinion, or taken his measures singly, from the ambitious part of Cardinal Mazarin's character, would have found himself often mistaken. Some, who had found this out, made their fortunes by letting him cheat them at play. On the contrary, Cardinal Richelieu's prevailing passion seems to have been ambition, and his immense riches only the natural consequences of that ambition gratified;

and yet, I make no doubt, but that ambition has now and then its turn with the former, and avarice with the latter. Richelieu (by the way) is so strong a proof of the inconsistency of human nature, that I cannot help observing to you, that while he absolutely governed both his King and his country, and was, in a great degree, the arbiter of the fate of all Europe, he was more jealous of the great reputation of Corneille than of the power of Spain; and more flattered with being thought (what he was not) the best poet, than with being thought (what he certainly was) the greatest statesman in Europe; and affairs stood still while he was concerting the criticism upon the *Cid*. Could one think this possible if one did not know it to be true?

Though men are all of one composition, the several ingredients are so differently proportioned in each individual, that no two are exactly alike; and no one at all times like himself. The ablest man will sometimes do weak things; the proudest man mean things; the honestest man ill things; and the wickedest man good ones. Study individuals then, and if you take (as you ought to do) their outlines from their prevailing passion, suspend your last finishing strokes till you have attended to and discovered the operations of their inferior passions, appetites, and humours. A man's general character may be that of the honestest man of the world: do not dispute it; you might be thought envious or ill-natured; but, at the same time,

do not take this probity upon trust, to such a degree as to put your life, fortune, or reputation in his power. This honest man may happen to be your rival in power, in interest, or in love; three passions that often put honesty to most severe trials, in which it is too often cast: but first analyse this honest man yourself; and then you will be able to judge how far you may, or may not, with safety trust him.

Suspect, in general, those who remarkably affect any one virtue; who raise it above all others, and who, in a manner, intimate that they possess it exclusively. I say suspect them, for they are commonly impostors; but do not be sure that they are always so; for I have sometimes known saints really religious, blusterers really brave, reformers of manners really honest, and prudes really chaste. Pry into the recesses of their hearts yourself, as far as you are able, and never implicitly adopt a character upon common fame; which, though generally right as to the great outlines of characters, is always wrong in some particulars.

Be upon your guard against those, who, upon very slight acquaintance, obtrude their unasked and unmerited friendship and confidence upon you; for they probably cram you with them only for their own eating: but, at the same time, do not roughly reject them upon that general supposition. Examine further, and see whether those unexpected offers flow from a warm heart and a silly head, or from a designing head and a

cold heart; for knavery and folly have often the same symptoms. In the first case there is no danger in accepting them, *valeant quantum valere possunt.* In the latter case it may be useful to seem to accept them, and artfully to turn the battery upon him who raised it.

There is an incontinency of friendship among young fellows, who are associated by their mutual pleasures only, which has, very frequently, bad consequences. A parcel of warm hearts and inexperienced heads, heated by convivial mirth, and possibly a little too much wine, vow, and really mean at the time, eternal friendship to each other, and indiscreetly pour out their whole souls in common, and without the least reserve. These confidences are as indiscreetly repealed as they were made: for new pleasures and new places soon dissolve this ill-cemented connection; and then very ill uses are made of these rash confidences. Bear your part, however, in young companies; nay, excel if you can in all the social and convivial joy and festivity that become youth. Trust them with your love-tales, if you please, but keep your serious views secret. Trust those only to some tried friend more experienced than yourself, and who, being in a different walk of life from you, is not likely to become your rival; for I would not advise you to depend so much upon the heroic virtue of mankind as to hope or believe that your competitor will ever be your friend, as to the object of that competition.

These are reserves and cautions very necessary to have, but very imprudent to show; the *volto sciolto* should accompany them.

## THE MINOR VIRTUES

DEAR BOY,

Great talents and great virtues (if you should have them) will procure you the respect and the admiration of mankind; but it is the lesser talents, the *leniores virtutes*, which must procure you their love and affection. The former, unassisted and unadorned by the latter, will extort praise; but will at the same time excite both fear and envy; two sentiments absolutely incompatible with love and affection.

Cæsar had all the great vices, and Cato all the great virtues that men could have. But Cæsar had the *leniores virtutes* which Cato wanted; and which made him beloved even by his enemies, and gained him the hearts of mankind in spite of their reason; while Cato was not even beloved by his friends, notwithstanding the esteem and respect which they could not refuse to his virtues; and I am apt to think that if Cæsar had wanted, and Cato possessed, those *leniores virtutes*, the former would not have attempted (at least with success), and the latter could have protected, the liberties of Rome. Mr. Addison, in his *Cato*, says of Cæsar (and I believe with truth), —

> Curse on his virtues, they've undone his country.

By which he means those lesser but engaging virtues of gentleness, affability, complaisance, and good-humour. The knowledge of a scholar, the courage of a hero, and the virtue of a Stoic, will be admired; but if the knowledge be accompanied with arrogance, the courage with ferocity, and the virtue with inflexible severity, the man will never be loved. The heroism of Charles XII. of Sweden (if his brutal courage deserves that name) was universally admired, but the man nowhere beloved. Whereas Henry IV. of France, who had full as much courage, and was much longer engaged in wars, was generally beloved upon account of his lesser and social virtues. We are all so formed, that our understandings are generally the dupes of our hearts, that is, of our passions; and the surest way to the former is through the latter, which must be engaged by the *leniores virtutes* alone, and the manner of exerting them. The insolent civility of a proud man is (for example), if possible, more shocking than his rudeness could be; because he shows you, by his manner, that he thinks it mere condescension in him; and that his goodness alone bestows upon you what you have no pretence to claim. He intimates his protection instead of his friendship, by a gracious nod instead of an usual bow; and rather signifies his consent that you may, than his invitation that you should, sit, walk, eat, or drink with him.

The costive liberality of a purse-proud man insults the distresses it sometimes relieves; he takes care to

make you feel your own misfortunes, and the difference between your situation and his; both which he insinuates to be justly merited: yours by your folly, his by his wisdom. The arrogant pedant does not communicate but promulgates his knowledge: he does not give it you, but he inflicts it upon you; and is (if possible) more desirous to show you your own ignorance than his own learning. Such manners as these, not only in the particular instances which I have mentioned, but likewise in all others, shock and revolt that little pride and vanity which every man has in his heart, and obliterate in us the obligation for the favour conferred, by reminding us of the motive which produced, and the manner which accompanied it.

These faults point out their opposite perfections, and your own good sense will naturally suggest them to you.

But besides these lesser virtues, there are, what may be called the lesser talents or accomplishments, which are of great use to adorn and recommend all the greater; and the more so, as all people are judges of the one, and but few are of the other. Everybody feels the impression which an engaging address, an agreeable manner of speaking, and an easy politeness, makes upon them; and they prepare the way for the favourable reception of their betters. Adieu!

## THE AUTHOR'S DÉBUT

LONDON, *January* 11, O.S. 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND,[1]

Yesterday I received a letter from Mr. Harte, of the 31st December, N.S., which I will answer soon; and for which I desire you to return him my thanks now. He tells me two things that give me great satisfaction; one is, that there are very few English at Rome; the other is, that you frequent the best foreign companies. This last is a very good symptom; for a man of sense is never desirous to frequent those companions where he is not desirous to please, or where he finds that he displeases. It will not be expected in those companies, that at your age you should have the *garbo*, the *disinvoltura*, and the *leggiadria* of a man of five-and-twenty, who had been long used to keep the best companies; and therefore do not be discouraged, and think yourself either slighted or laughed at, because you see others, older and more used to the world, easier, more familiar, and consequently rather better received in those companies than yourself. In time your turn will come; and if you do but show an inclination, a desire to please, though you should be embarrassed, or even err in the means (which must necessarily happen to you at first), yet the will (to use

[1] Now that the boy has become a man Lord Chesterfield calls him his friend.

a vulgar expression) will be taken for the deed; and people, instead of laughing at you, will be glad to instruct you. Good-sense can only give you the great outlines of good-breeding; but observation and usage can alone give you the delicate touches and the fine colouring. You will naturally endeavour to show the utmost respect to people of certain ranks and characters, and consequently you will show it; but the proper, the delicate manner of showing that respect, nothing but observation and time can give.

I remember, that when, with all the awkwardness and rust of Cambridge about me, I was first introduced into good company, I was frightened out of my wits. I was determined to be what I thought civil; I made fine low bows, and placed myself below everybody; but when I was spoken to, or attempted to speak myself, *obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit.*[1] If I saw people whisper, I was sure it was at me; and I thought myself the sole object of either the ridicule, or the censure of the whole company, who, God knows, did not trouble their heads about me. In this way I suffered, for some time, like a criminal at the bar; and should certainly have renounced all polite company for ever, if I had not been so convinced of the absolute necessity of forming my manners upon those of the best companies, that I determined to persevere, and suffer anything or everything rather than not compass that point. Insensibly it grew

[1] Vergil, *Æneid*, ii. 774.

easier to me; and I began not to bow so ridiculously low, and to answer questions without great hesitation or stammering: if, now and then, some charitable people, seeing my embarrassment, and being *desœuvré* themselves, came and spoke to me, I considered them as angels sent to comfort me; and that gave me a little courage. I got more soon afterwards, and was intrepid enough to go up to a fine woman, and tell her that I thought it a warm day; she answered me, very civilly, that she thought so too; upon which the conversation ceased, on my part, for some time, till she, goodnaturedly resuming it, spoke to me thus: "I see your embarrassment, and I am sure that the few words you said to me cost you a great deal; but do not be discouraged for that reason, and avoid good company; we see that you desire to please, and that is the main point; you want only the manner, and you think that you want it still more than you do. You must go through your noviciate before you can profess good-breeding; and, if you will be my novice, I will present you to my acquaintance as such."

You will easily imagine how much this speech pleased me, and how awkwardly I answered it; I hemmed once or twice (for it gave me a burr in my throat) before I could tell her that I was very much obliged to her; that it was true that I had a great deal of reason to distrust my own behaviour, not being used to fine company; and that I should be proud of being her novice, and receiving her instruc-

tions. As soon as I had fumbled out this answer, she called up three or four people to her, and said: *Sçavez vous* (for she was a foreigner, and I was abroad) *que j'ai entrepris ce jeune homme, et qu'il le faut rassurer? Pour moi, je crois en avoir fait la conquête, car il s'est émancipé dans le moment au point de me dire, en tremblant, qu'il faisoit chaud. Il faut que vous m'aidiez à le dérouiller.* The company laughed at this lecture, and I was stunned with it. I did not know whether she was serious or in jest. By turns I was pleased, ashamed, encouraged, and dejected. But when I found afterwards, that both she, and those to whom she had presented me, countenanced and protected me in company, I gradually got more assurance, and began not to be ashamed of endeavouring to be civil. I copied the best masters, at first servilely, afterwards more freely, and at last I joined habit and invention.

## THE BEST MODELS FOR THE GRACES OF LIFE

LONDON, *January* 18, O.S. 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I consider the solid part of your little edifice as so near being finished and completed, that my only remaining care is about the embellishments; and that must now be your principal care too. Adorn yourself with all those graces and accomplishments, which, without solidity, are frivolous; but without which, so-

lidity is, to a great degree, useless. Take one man, with a very moderate degree of knowledge, but with a pleasing figure, a prepossessing address, graceful in all that he says and does, polite, *liant*, and, in short, adorned with all the lesser talents; and take another man, with sound sense and profound knowledge, but without the above-mentioned advantages; the former will not only get the better of the latter, in every pursuit of every kind, but in truth there will be no sort of competition between them. But can every man acquire these advantages? I say Yes, if he please; supposing he is in a situation, and in circumstances, to frequent good company. Attention, observation, and imitation, will most infallibly do it.

When you see a man, whose first *abord* strikes you, prepossesses you in his favour, and makes you entertain a good opinion of him, you do not know why: analyse that *abord*, and examine, within yourself, the several parts that compose it; and you will generally find it to be the result, the happy assemblage, of modesty unembarrassed, respect without timidity, a genteel, but unaffected attitude of body and limbs, an open, cheerful, but unsmirking countenance, and a dress, by no means negligent, and yet not foppish. Copy him, then, not servilely, but as some of the greatest masters of painting have copied others; insomuch, that their copies have been equal to the originals, both as to beauty and freedom. When you see a man, who is universally allowed to shine as an agree-

able well-bred man, and a fine gentleman (as for example, the Duke de Nivernois), attend to him, watch him carefully; observe in what manner he addresses himself to his superiors, how he lives with his equals, and how he treats his inferiors. Mind his turn of conversation, in the several situations of morning visits, the table, and the evening amusements. Imitate, without mimicking him; and be his duplicate, but not his ape. You will find that he takes care never to say or do anything that can be construed into a slight, or a negligence; or that can, in any degree, mortify people's vanity and self-love; on the contrary, you will perceive that he makes people pleased with him, by making them first pleased with themselves: he shows respect, regard, esteem, and attention, where they are severally proper; he sows them with care, and he reaps them in plenty.

These amiable accomplishments are all to be acquired by use and imitation; for we are, in truth, more than half what we are, by imitation. The great point is, to choose good models, and to study them with care. People insensibly contract, not only the air, the manners, and the vices, of those with whom they commonly converse, but their virtues too, and even their way of thinking. This is so true, that I have known very plain understandings catch a certain degree of wit, by constantly conversing with those who had a great deal. Persist, therefore, in keeping the best company, and you will insensibly become like

them; but if you add attention and observation, you will very soon be one of them. This inevitable contagion of company, shows you the necessity of keeping the best, and avoiding all other; for in every one, something will stick. You have hitherto, I confess, had very few opportunities of keeping polite company. Westminster school is, undoubtedly, the seat of illiberal manners and brutal behaviour. Leipsig, I suppose, is not the seat of refined and elegant manners. Venice, I believe, has done something; Rome, I hope, will do a great deal more; and Paris will, I dare say, do all that you want: always supposing, that you frequent the best companies, and in the intention of improving and forming yourself; for, without that intention, nothing will do.

I here subjoin a list of all those necessary, ornamental accomplishments (without which, no man living can either please or rise in the world) which hitherto I fear you want, and which only require your care and attention to possess.

To speak elegantly, whatever language you speak in; without which, nobody will hear you with pleasure, and, consequently, you will speak to very little purpose.

An agreeable and distinct elocution; without which nobody will hear you with patience; this everybody may acquire, who is not born with some imperfection in the organs of speech. You are not; and therefore it is wholly in your power. You need take much less pains for it than Demosthenes did.

A distinguished politeness of manners and address; which common sense, observation, good company, and imitation, will infallibly give you, if you will accept of it.

A genteel carriage, and graceful motions, with the air of a man of fashion. A good dancing master, with some care on your part, and some imitation of those who excel, will soon bring this about.

To be extremely clean in your person, and perfectly well dressed, according to the fashion, be that what it will. Your negligence of dress, while you were a schoolboy, was pardonable, but would not be so now.

Upon the whole, take it for granted, that, without these accomplishments, all you know, and all you can do, will avail you very little. Adieu!

## ECONOMY OF TIME

LONDON, *February* 5, O.S. 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Very few people are good economists of their fortune, and still fewer of their time; and yet of the two the latter is the most precious. I heartily wish you to be a good economist of both; and you are now of an age to begin to think seriously of these two important articles. Young people are apt to think they have so much time before them, that they may squander what they please of it, and yet have enough left; as very great fortunes have frequently seduced people to a

ruinous profusion: fatal mistakes! always repented of, but always too late!

Old Mr. Lowndes,[1] the famous Secretary of the Treasury in the reigns of King William, Queen Anne, and King George the First, used to say, *take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.* To this maxim, which he not only preached but practised, his two grandsons at this time owe the very considerable fortunes that he left them.

This holds equally true as to time; and I most earnestly recommend to you the care of those minutes and quarters of hours, in the course of the day, which people think too short to deserve their attention; and yet, if summed up at the end of the year, would amount to a very considerable portion of time. For example: you are to be at such a place at twelve, by appointment; you go out at eleven to make two or three visits first; those persons are not at home; instead of sauntering away that intermediate time at a coffee-house, and possibly alone, return home, write a letter, beforehand, for the ensuing post, or take up a good book; I do not mean Descartes, Mallebranche, Locke, or Newton, by way of dipping; but some book of rational amusement; and detached pieces, as Horace, Boileau, Waller, La Bruyere, etc. This will be so much time saved, and by no means ill employed.

[1] William Lowndes, who represented St. Mawes and other places. He is chiefly remarkable for his elaborate speech in the case of Ashby and White, January 25, 1704.

Many people lose a great deal of time by reading, for they read frivolous and idle books; such as the absurd romances of the two last centuries, where characters that never existed are insipidly displayed, and sentiments that were never felt pompously described; the Oriental ravings and extravagances of the Arabian Nights and Mogul Tales; or the new flimsy *brochures* that now swarm in France, of Fairy Tales, *Réflexions sur le Cœur et l'Esprit, Metaphysique de l'Amour, Analyse de Beaux Sentiments;* and such sort of idle frivolous stuff, that nourishes and improves the mind just as much as whipped cream would the body. Stick to the best established books in every language; the celebrated poets, historians, orators, or philosophers. By these means (to use a city metaphor) you will make fifty *per cent.* of that time of which others do not make above three or four, or probably nothing at all.

Many people lose a great deal of their time by laziness; they loll and yawn in a great chair, tell themselves that they have not time to begin anything then, and that it will do as well another time. This is a most unfortunate disposition, and the greatest obstruction to both knowledge and business. At your age, you have no right nor claim to laziness; I have, if I please, being *emeritus*. You are but just listed in the world, and must be active, diligent, indefatigable. If ever you propose commanding with dignity, you must serve up to it with diligence. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do to-day.

Despatch is the soul of business; and nothing contributes more to Despatch, than Method. Lay down a method for everything, and stick to it inviolably, as far as unexpected incidents may allow. Fix one certain hour and day in the week for your accounts, and keep them together in their proper order; by which means they will require very little time, and you can never be much cheated. Whatever letters and papers you keep, docket and tie them up in their respective classes, so that you may instantly have recourse to any one. Lay down a method also for your reading, for which you allot a certain share of your mornings; let it be in a consistent and consecutive course, and not in that desultory and immethodical manner, in which many people read scraps of different authors, upon different subjects.

Keep a useful and short common-place book of what you read, to help your memory only, and not for pedantic quotations. Never read History without having maps, and a chronological book, or tables, lying by you, and constantly recurred to; without which, History is only a confused heap of facts. One method more I recommend to you by which I have found great benefit, even in the most dissipated part of my life; that is, to rise early, and at the same hour every morning, how late soever you may have sat up the night before. This secures you an hour or two, at least, of reading or reflection, before the common interruptions of the morning begin; and it will save

your constitution, by forcing you to go to bed early, at least one night in three.

You will say, it may be, as many young people would, that all this order and method is very troublesome, only fit for dull people, and a disagreeable restraint upon the noble spirit and fire of youth. I deny it; and assert, on the contrary, that it will procure you, both more time and more taste for your pleasures; and, so far from being troublesome to you, that, after you have pursued it a month, it would be troublesome to you to lay it aside.

Business whets the appetite, and gives a taste of pleasures, as exercise does to food; and business can never be done without method; it raises the spirits for pleasures; and a *spectacle*, a ball, an assembly, will much more sensibly affect a man who has employed, than a man who has lost, the preceding part of the day; nay, I will venture to say, that a fine lady will seem to have more charms, to a man of study or business, than to a saunterer. The same listlessness runs through his whole conduct, and he is as insipid in his pleasures, as inefficient in everything else.

## THE MORAL VIRTUES—WARNING AGAINST VANITY

LONDON, *May* 17, O.S. 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your apprenticeship is near out, and you are soon to set up for yourself; that approaching moment is a critical one for you, and an anxious one for me. A tradesman who would succeed in his way must begin by establishing a character of integrity and good manners; without the former, nobody will go to his shop at all; without the latter, nobody will go there twice. This rule does not exclude the fair arts of trade. He may sell his goods at the best price he can within certain bounds. He may avail himself of the humour, the whims, and the fantastical tastes of his customers; but what he warrants to be good must be really so, what he seriously asserts must be true, or his first fraudulent profits will soon end in a bankruptcy. It is the same in higher life, and in the great business of the world. A man who does not solidly establish and really deserve a character of truth, probity, good manners, and good morals, at his first setting out in the world, may impose and shine like a meteor for a very short time, but will very soon vanish, and be extinguished with contempt.

People easily pardon, in young men, the common irregularities of the senses; but they do not forgive

the least vice of the heart. The heart never grows better by age; I fear rather worse, always harder.[1] A young liar will be an old one, and a young knave will only be a greater knave as he grows older. But should a bad young heart, accompanied with a good head (which, by the way, very seldom is the case), really reform in a more advanced age from a consciousness of its folly, as well as of its guilt, such a conversion would only be thought prudential and political, but never sincere. I hope in God, and I verily believe, that you want no moral virtue. But the possession of all the moral virtues, *in actu primo*, as the logicians call it, is not sufficient; you must have them *in actu secundo* too; nay, that is not sufficient neither; you must have the reputation of them also.

Your character in the world must be built upon that solid foundation, or it will soon fall, and upon your own head. You cannot, therefore, be too careful, too nice, too scrupulous, in establishing this character at first, upon which your whole depends. Let no conversation, no example, no fashion, no *bon mot*, no silly desire of seeming to be above, what most knaves and many fools call prejudices, ever tempt you to avow, excuse, extenuate, or laugh at the least breach of morality; but show upon all occasions, and take all occasions to show, a detestation and abhor-

[1] "I believe men may be generally observed to grow less tender as they advance in age." — *The Rambler*, No. 78.

rence of it. There, though young, you ought to be strict; and there only, while young, it becomes you to be strict and severe. But there too, spare the persons while you lash the crimes. All this relates, as you easily judge, to the vices of the heart, such as lying, fraud, envy, malice, detraction, etc.; and I do not extend it to the little frailties of youth, flowing from high spirits and warm blood. It would ill become you, at your age, to declaim against them, and sententiously censure a gallantry, an accidental excess of the table, a frolic, an inadvertency; no, keep as free from them yourself as you can, but say nothing against them in others. They certainly mend by time, often by reason; and a man's worldly character is not affected by them, provided it be pure in all other respects.

To come now to a point of much less, but yet of very great consequence, at your first setting out. Be extremely upon your guard against vanity, the common failing of inexperienced youth; but particularly against that kind of vanity that dubs a man a coxcomb; a character which, once acquired, is more indelible than that of the priesthood. It is not to be imagined by how many different ways vanity defeats its own purposes. One man decides peremptorily upon every subject, betrays his ignorance upon many, and shows a disgusting presumption upon the rest. Another desires to appear successful among the women; he hints at the encouragement he has

received from those of the most distinguished rank and beauty, and intimates a particular connection with some one; if it is true, it is ungenerous; if false, it is infamous; but in either case he destroys the reputation he wants to get. Some flatter their vanity by little extraneous objects which have not the least relation to themselves; such as being descended from, related to, or acquainted with, people of distinguished merit, and eminent characters. They talk perpetually of their grandfather such-a-one, their uncle such-a-one, and their intimate friend Mr. such-a-one, with whom, possibly, they are hardly acquainted. But admitting it all to be as they would have it, what then? Have they the more merit for these accidents? Certainly not. On the contrary, their taking up adventitious, proves their want of intrinsic merit; a rich man never borrows. Take this rule for granted, as a never-failing one; that you must never seem to affect the character in which you have a mind to shine. Modesty is the only sure bait when you angle for praise. The affectation of courage will make even a brave man pass only for a bully; as the affectation of wit will make a man of parts pass for a coxcomb. By this modesty I do not mean timidity and awkward bashfulness. On the contrary, be inwardly firm and steady, know your own value, whatever it may be, and act upon that principle; but take great care to let nobody discover that you do know your own value. Whatever real merit you have other people will discover; and people

always magnify their own discoveries, as they lessen those of others.

## MANNER AS IMPORTANT AS MATTER IN WRITING

LONDON, *November* 19, O.S. 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I come now to another part of your letter, which is the orthography, if I may call bad spelling *orthography*. You spell induce, *enduce;* and grandeur, you spell grand*ure;* two faults, of which few of my housemaids would have been guilty. I must tell you, that orthography, in the true sense of the word, is so absolutely necessary for a man of letters, or a gentleman, that one false spelling may fix a ridicule upon him for the rest of his life; and I know a man of quality, who never recovered the ridicule of having spelled *wholesome* without the *w*.

Reading with care will secure everybody from false spelling; for books are always well spelled, according to the orthography of the times. Some words are indeed doubtful, being spelled differently by different authors of equal authority, but those are few; and in those cases every man has his option, because he may plead his authority either way; but where there is but one right way, as in the two words above-mentioned, it is unpardonable and ridiculous for a gentleman to miss it: even a woman of a tolerable education would

despise, and laugh at a lover, who should send her an ill-spelled *billet-doux*. I fear, and suspect, that you have taken it into your head, in most cases, that the Matter is all, and the Manner little or nothing. If you have, undeceive yourself, and be convinced that, in everything, the Manner is full as important as the Matter. If you speak the sense of an angel, in bad words, and with a disagreeable utterance, nobody will hear you twice, who can help it. If you write epistles as well as Cicero, but in a very bad hand, and very ill-spelled, whoever receives, will laugh at them; and if you had the figure of Adonis, with an awkward air and motions, it will disgust instead of pleasing. Study Manner therefore in everything, if you would be anything.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD HAND-WRITING

LONDON, *January* 28, O.S. 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A bill for ninety pounds sterling was brought me, the other day, said to be drawn upon me by you; I scrupled paying it at first, not upon the account of the sum, but because you had sent me no letter of advice, which is always done in those transactions; and still more, because I did not perceive that you had signed it. The person who presented it desired me to look again, and that I should discover your name at the

bottom; accordingly I looked again, and with the help of my magnifying glass, did perceive, that what I had first taken only for somebody's mark was, in truth, your name written in the worst and smallest hand I ever saw in my life. I cannot write quite so ill, but it was something like this [here he imitates it]. However, I paid it at a venture; though I would almost rather lose the money, than that signature should be yours. All gentlemen, and all men of business, write their names always in the same way, that their signature may be so well known as not to be easily counterfeited; and they generally sign in a larger character than their common hand; whereas your name was in a less, and a worse hand than your common writing. This suggested to me the various accidents which may very probably happen to you while you write so ill.

For instance, if you were to write in such a character to the Secretary's office, your letter would immediately be sent to the decipherer, as containing matters of the utmost secrecy, not fit to be trusted to the common character. If you were to write to an antiquarian, he (knowing you to be a man of learning) would certainly try it by the Runic, Celtic, or Sclavonian alphabet; never suspecting it to be a modern character.

I have often told you, that every man who has the use of his eyes and of his hand, can write whatever hand he pleases; and it is plain that you can, since you write both the Greek and German characters, which you never learned of a writing-master, extremely

well, though your common hand which you learned of a master, is an exceeding bad and illiberal one, equally unfit for business or common use. I do not desire that you should write the laboured, stiff character of a writing master; a man of business must write quick and well, and that depends singly upon use. I would therefore advise you to get some very good writing-master at Paris, and apply to it for a month only, which will be sufficient; for, upon my word, the writing of a genteel plain hand of business is of much more importance than you think. You will say, it may be, that when you write so very ill, it is because you are in a hurry? a man of sense may be in haste, but can never be in a hurry, because he knows, that whatever he does in a hurry he must necessarily do very ill. He may be in haste to dispatch an affair, but he will take care not to let that haste hinder his doing it well. Little minds are in a hurry, when the object proves (as it commonly does) too big for them; they run, they hare, they puzzle, confound, and perplex, themselves; they want to do everything at once, and never do it at all. But a man of sense takes the time necessary for doing the thing he is about well: and his haste to dispatch a business, only appears by the continuity of his application to it: he pursues it with a cool steadiness, and finishes it before he begins any other. I own your time is much taken up, and you have a great many different things to do; but remember, that you had much better do half of them well, and leave the other

half undone, than do them all indifferently. Moreover, the few seconds that are saved in the course of the day, by writing ill instead of well, do not amount to an object of time, by any means equivalent to the disgrace or ridicule of writing such a scrawl. Consider, that if your very bad writing could furnish me with matter of ridicule, what will it not do to others, who do not view you in the same light that I do.

## GOOD MANNERS PROVOKE ESTEEM

LONDON, *February* 28, O.S. 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

This epigram in Martial,

> Non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare,
> Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te;

has puzzled a great many people; who cannot conceive how it is possible not to love anybody, and yet not to know the reason why. I think I conceive Martial's meaning very clearly, though the nature of epigram, which is to be short, would not allow him to explain it more fully; and I take it to be this, "O Sabidis, you are a very worthy deserving man; you have a thousand good qualities, you have a great deal of learning; I esteem, I respect, but for the soul of me I cannot love you, though I cannot particularly say why. You are not amiable; you have not those engaging manners, those pleasing attentions, those

graces, and that address, which are absolutely necessary to please, though impossible to define. I cannot say it is this or that particular thing that hinders me from loving you, it is the whole together; and upon the whole you are not agreeable."

How often have I, in the course of my life, found myself in this situation, with regard to many of my acquaintance, whom I have honoured and respected without being able to love? I did not know why, because, when one is young, one does not take the trouble, nor allow oneself the time, to analyse one's sentiments, and to trace them up to their source. But subsequent observation and reflection have taught me why. There is a man, whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts, I acknowledge, admire, and respect; but whom it is impossible for me to love, that I am almost in a fever whenever I am in his company. His figure (without being deformed) seems made to disgrace or ridicule the common structure of the human body. His legs and arms are never in the position which, according to the situation of his body, they ought to be in; but constantly employed in committing acts of hostility upon the Graces. He throws anywhere, but down his throat, whatever he means to drink; and only mangles what he means to carve. Inattentive to all the regards of social life, he mis-times or mis-places everything. He disputes with heat, and indiscriminately; mindless of the rank, character, and situation of the several gradations of

familiarity or respect; he is exactly the same to his superiors, his equals, and his inferiors; and therefore, by a necessary consequence, absurd to two of the three. Is it possible to love such a man? No. The utmost I can do for him, is to consider him a respectable Hottentot.[1]

## GENTLE IN MANNER, STRONG IN DEED

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I mentioned to you, some time ago, a sentence, which I would most earnestly wish you always to re-

[1] "This character has been generally understood to be meant for Dr. Johnson; and I have no doubt that it was," says Boswell. "But I remember when the literary property of Lord Chesterfield's Letters was contested in the Court of Sessions in Scotland, and M. Dundas, one of the counsel for the proprietors, read this character as an exhibition of Johnson, Lord Hailes, one of the judges, maintained, with some warmth, that it was not intended as a portrait of Johnson, but of a late noble Lord, distinguished for abstruse science. I have heard Johnson himself talk of the character, and say that it was meant for George Lord Lyttelton, in which I could by no means agree; for his Lordship had nothing of that violence which is a conspicuous feature in the composition. Finding that my illustrious friend could bear to have it supposed that it might be meant for him, I said laughingly that there was one *trait* which unquestionably did not belong to him, — *he throws his meat anywhere but down his throat.* 'Sir,' said he, 'Lord Chesterfield never saw me eat in his life!'" — Life of Dr. Johnson, ad ann. 1754. Dr. Birkbeck Hill, however, has shown (*Dr. Johnson: his Friends, his Critics*) that Dr. Johnson was not intended in this passage, but Mr., afterwards Lord, Lyttelton.

tain in your thoughts and observe in your conduct. It is *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.* I do not know any one rule so unexceptionally useful and necessary in every part of life. I shall therefore take it for my text to-day; and as old men love preaching, and I have some right to preach to you, I here present you with my sermon upon these words. To proceed then regularly and *pulpetically;* I will first show you, my beloved, the necessary connexion of the two members of my text, *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.* In the next place, I shall set forth the advantages and utility resulting from a strict observance of the precept contained in my text; and conclude with an application of the whole. The *suaviter in modo* alone would degenerate and sink into a mean, timid complaisance, and passiveness, if not supported and dignified by the *fortiter in re;* which would also run into impetuosity and brutality if not tempered and softened by the *suaviter in modo;* however, they are seldom united. The warm choleric man with strong animal spirits despises the *suaviter in modo,* and thinks to carry all before him by the *fortiter in re.* He may, possibly, by great accidents, now and then succeed, when he has only weak and timid people to deal with; but his general fate will be to shock, offend, be hated, and fail. On the other hand, the cunning, crafty man, thinks to gain all ends by the *suaviter in modo* only: *he becomes all things to all men;* he seems to have no opinion of his own, and servilely adopts the present

opinion of the present person; he insinuates himself only into the esteem of fools, but is soon detected, and surely despised by everybody else. The wise man (who differs as much from the cunning as from the choleric man) alone joins the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re.*

Now to the advantages arising from the strict observance of this precept. If you are in authority, and have a right to command, your commands delivered *suaviter in modo* will be willingly, cheerfully, and consequently well obeyed; whereas, if given only *fortiter*, that is brutally, they will rather, as Tacitus says, be interpreted than executed. For my own part, if I bid my footman bring me a glass of wine in a rough, insulting manner, I should expect that in obeying me he would contrive to spill some of it upon me; and I am sure I should deserve it. A cool, steady resolution should show, that where you have a right to command you will be obeyed; but, at the same time, a gentleness in the manner of enforcing that obedience should make it a cheerful one, and soften, as much as possible, the mortifying consciousness of inferiority. If you are to ask a favour, or even to solicit your due, you must do it *suaviter in modo*, or you will give those who have a mind to refuse you either, a pretence to do it by resenting the manner; but, on the other hand, you must, by a steady perseverance and decent tenaciousness, show the *fortiter in re.*

The right motives are seldom the true ones of

men's actions, especially of kings, ministers, and people in high stations; who often give to importunity, and fear what they would refuse to justice or to merit. By the *suaviter in modo* engage their hearts, if you can; at least, prevent the pretence of offence; but take care to show enough of the *fortiter in re* to extort from their love of ease, or their fear, what you might in vain hope for from their justice or good-nature. People in high life are hardened to the wants and distresses of mankind as surgeons are to their bodily pains; they see and hear of them all day long, and even of so many simulated ones, that they do not know which are real and which not. Other sentiments are therefore to be applied to than those of mere justice and humanity; their favour must be captivated by the *suaviter in modo;* their love of ease disturbed by unwearied importunity, or their fears wrought upon by a decent intimation of implacable, cool resentment; this is the true *fortiter in re.* This precept is the only way I know in the world of being loved without being despised, and feared without being hated. It constitutes the dignity of character, which every wise man must endeavour to establish.

Now to apply what has been said, and so conclude.

If you find that you have a hastiness in your temper, which unguardedly breaks out into indiscreet sallies or rough expressions, to either your superiors, your equals, or your inferiors, watch it narrowly, check it carefully, and call the *suaviter in modo* to your as-

sistance; at the first impulse of passion be silent till you can be soft. Labour even to get the command of your countenance so well, that those emotions may not be read in it; a most unspeakable advantage in business. On the other hand, let no complaisance, no gentleness of temper, no weak desire of pleasing on your part, no wheedling, coaxing, nor flattery, on other people's, make you recede one jot from any point that reason and prudence have bid you pursue; but return to the charge, persist, persevere, and you will find most things attainable that are possible. A yielding, timid meekness is always abused and insulted by the unjust and the unfeeling; but when sustained by the *fortiter in re*, is always respected, commonly successful. In your friendships and connections, as well as in your enmities, this rule is particularly useful; let your firmness and vigour preserve and invite attachments to you; but, at the same time, let your manner hinder the enemies of your friends and dependants from becoming yours; let your enemies be disarmed by the gentleness of your manner, but let them feel at the same time the steadiness of your just resentment; for there is great difference between bearing malice, which is always ungenerous, and a resolute self-defence, which is always prudent and justifiable. In negotiations with foreign Ministers, remember the *fortiter in re;* give up no point, accept of no expedient, till the utmost necessity reduces you to it, and even then dispute the ground inch by inch; but

then, while you are contending with the minister *fortiter in re*, remember to gain the man by the *suaviter in modo*. If you engage his heart, you have a fair chance for imposing upon his understanding, and determining his will. Tell him in a frank and gallant manner that your ministerial wrangles do not lessen your personal regard for his merit; but that, on the contrary, his zeal and ability in the service of his master increase it; and that of all things you desire to make a good friend of so good a servant. By these means you may and will very often be a gainer; you never can be a loser.

Some people cannot gain upon themselves to be easy and civil to those who are either their rivals, competitors, or opposers, though, independently of those accidental circumstances, they would like and esteem them. They betray a shyness and an awkwardness in company with them, and catch at any little thing to expose them; and so, from temporary and only occasional opponents, make them their personal enemies. This is exceedingly weak and detrimental, as indeed is all humour in business; which can only be carried on successfully by unadulterated good policy and right reasoning. In such situations I would be more particularly and *noblement* civil, easy, and frank, with the man whose designs I traversed; this is commonly called generosity and magnanimity, but is, in truth, good sense and policy.

The manner is often as important as the matter,

sometimes more so; a favor may make an enemy, and an injury may make a friend, according to the different manner in which they are severally done. The countenance, the address, the words, the enunciation, the Graces, add great efficacy to the *suaviter in modo*, and great dignity to the *fortiter in re;* and consequently they deserve the utmost attention.

From what has been said I conclude with this observation: that gentleness of manners, with firmness of mind, is a short but full description of human perfection, on this side of religious and moral duties; that you may be seriously convinced of this truth, and show it in your life and conversation, is the most sincere and ardent wish of Yours.

## THE CHANGE OF THE CALENDAR

LONDON, *March* 18, O.S. 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I acquainted you in a former letter that I had brought a bill into the House of Lords, for correcting and reforming our present calendar, which is the Julian, and for adopting the Gregorian. I will now give you a more particular account of that affair, from which reflections will naturally occur to you that I hope may be useful, and which I fear you have not made. It was notorious, that the Julian calendar was erroneous, and had overcharged the solar year with eleven days. Pope Gregory XIII. corrected

this error; his reformed calendar was immediately received by all the Catholic Powers of Europe, and afterwards adopted by all the Protestant ones, except Russia, Sweden, and England. It was not, in my opinion, very honourable for England to remain in a gross and avowed error, especially in such company; the inconvenience of it was likewise felt by all those who had foreign correspondences, whether political or mercantile. I determined, therefore, to attempt the reformation; I consulted the best lawyers, and the most skilful astronomers, and we cooked up a bill for that purpose. But then my difficulty began; I was to bring in this bill, which was necessarily composed of law jargon and astronomical calculations, to both which I am an utter stranger. However, it was absolutely necessary to make the House of Lords think that I knew something of the matter, and also to make them believe that they knew something of it themselves, which they do not. For my own part, I could just as soon have talked Celtic or Sclavonian to them as astronomy, and they would have understood me full as well; so I resolved to do better than speak to the purpose, and to please instead of informing them. I gave them, therefore, only an historical account of calendars, from the Egyptian down to the Gregorian, amusing them now and then with little episodes; but I was particularly attentive to the choice of my words, to the harmony and roundness of my periods, to my elocution, to my action. This succeeded, and ever

will succeed; they thought I informed, because I pleased them; and many of them said, that I had made the whole very clear to them, when, God knows, I had not even attempted it. Lord Macclesfield, who had the greatest share in forming the bill, and who is one of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers in Europe,[1] spoke afterwards with infinite knowledge, and all the clearness that so intricate a matter would admit of; but as his words, his periods, and his utterance were not near so good as mine, the preference was most unanimously, though most unjustly, given to me.

This will ever be the case; every numerous assembly is *mob*, let the individuals who compose it be what they will. Mere reason and good sense is never to be talked to a mob; their passions, their sentiments, their senses, and their seeming interests, are alone to be applied to. Understanding they have collectively none; but they have ears and eyes, which must be flattered and seduced; and this can only be done by eloquence, tuneful periods, graceful action, and all the various parts of oratory.

[1] George, second Earl of Macclesfield. In November, 1751, he was unanimously elected President of the Royal Society. He died in 1764.

## LES BIENSÉANCES — WITH SUPERIORS, INFERIORS, AND IN MIXED COMPANY

GREENWICH, *June* 13, O.S. 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Les bienséances* are a most necessary part of the knowledge of the world. They consist in the relations of persons, things, time, and place; good sense points them out, good company perfects them (supposing always an attention and a desire to please), and good policy recommends them.

Were you to converse with a King, you ought to be as easy and unembarrassed as with your own valet-de-chambre; but yet every look, word, and action, should imply the utmost respect. What would be proper and well-bred with others, much your superiors, would be absurd and ill-bred with one so very much so. You must wait till you are spoken to; you must receive, not give, the subject of conversation; and you must even take care that the given subject of such conversation do not lead you into any impropriety. The art would be to carry it, if possible, to some indirect flattery; such as commending those virtues in some other person, in which that Prince either thinks he does, or at least would be thought by others to excel. Almost the same precautions are necessary to be used with Ministers, Generals, etc., who expect to be treated with very near the same

respect as their masters, and commonly deserve it better. There is, however, this difference, that one may begin the conversation with them, if on their side it should happen to drop, provided one does not carry it to any subject, upon which it is improper either for them to speak or be spoken to. In these two cases, certain attitudes and actions would be extremely absurd, because too easy, and consequently disrespectful. As for instance, if you were to put your arms across in your bosom, twirl your snuff-box, trample with your feet, scratch your head, etc., it would be shockingly ill-bred in that company; and, indeed, not extremely well-bred in any other. The great difficulty in those cases, though a very surmountable one by attention and custom, is to join perfect inward ease with perfect outward respect.

In mixed companies with your equals (for in mixed companies all people are to a certain degree equal) greater ease and liberty are allowed; but they too have their bounds within *bienséance*. There is a social respect necessary; you may start your own subject of conversation with modesty, taking great care, however, *de ne jamais parler de cordes dans la maison d'un pendu*. Your words, gestures, and attitudes have a greater degree of latitude, though by no means an unbounded one. You may have your hands in your pockets, take snuff, sit, stand, or occasionally walk, as you like; but I believe you would not think it very *bienséant* to whistle, put on your hat, loosen your

garters or your buckles, lie down upon a couch, or go to bed and welter in an easy chair. These are negligences and freedoms which one can only take when quite alone; they are injurious to superiors, shocking and offensive to equals, brutal and insulting to inferiors. That easiness of carriage and behaviour, which is exceedingly engaging, widely differs from negligence and inattention, and by no means implies that one may do whatever one pleases; it only means that one is not to be stiff, formal, embarrassed, disconcerted, and ashamed, like country bumpkins, and people who have never been in good company; but it requires great attention to, and a scrupulous observation of *les bienséances;* whatever one ought to do, is to be done with ease and unconcern; whatever is improper must not be done at all.

In mixed companies also, different ages and sexes are to be differently addressed. You would not talk of your pleasures to men of a certain age, gravity, and dignity; they justly expect from young people a degree of deference and regard. You should be full as easy with them as with people of your own years; but your manner must be different; more respect must be implied; and it is not amiss to insinuate, that from them you expect to learn. It flatters and comforts age, for not being able to take a part in the joy and titter of youth. To women you should always address yourself with great outward respect and attention, whatever you feel inwardly; their sex is by long pre-

scription entitled to it; and it is among the duties of *bienséance;* at the same time that respect is very properly and very agreeably mixed with a degree of *enjouement*, if you have it; but then, that *badinage* must either directly or indirectly tend to their praise, and even not be liable to a malicious construction to their disadvantage. But here too, great attention must be had to the difference of age, rank, and situation. A *Maréchale* of fifty must not be played with like a young coquette of fifteen; respect and *serious enjouement*, if I may couple those two words, must be used with the former, and mere *badinage, zesté même d'un peu de polissonnerie*, is pardonable with the latter.

Another important point of *les bienséances*, seldom enough attended to, is, not to run your own present humour and disposition indiscriminately against everybody; but to observe, conform to, and adopt theirs. For example, if you happened to be in high good-humour and a flow of spirits, would you go and sing a *pont-neuf*, or cut a caper, to la Maréchale de Coigny, the Pope's Nuncio, or Abbé Sallier, or to any person of natural gravity and melancholy, or who at that time should be in grief? I believe not; as, on the other hand, I suppose, that if you were in low spirits, or real grief, you would not choose to bewail your situation with *la petite Blot*. If you cannot command your present humour and disposition, single out those to converse with who happen to be in the humour the nearest to your own.

Loud laughter is extremely inconsistent with *les bienséances*, as it is only the illiberal and noisy testimony of the joy of the mob at some very silly thing. A gentleman is often seen, but very seldom heard, to laugh. Nothing is more contrary to *les bienséances* than horse play, or *jeux de main* of any kind whatever, and has often very serious, sometimes very fatal consequences. Romping, struggling, throwing things at one another's head, are the becoming pleasantries of the mob, but degrade a gentleman; *giuoco di mano, giuoco di villano*, is a very true saying, among the few true sayings of the Italians.

Peremptoriness and decision in young people is *contraire aux bienséances;* they should seldom seem to assert, and always use some softening, mitigating expression — such as *s'il m'est permis de le dire; je croirois plutôt; si j'ose m'expliquer*, which softens the manner, without giving up, or even weakening the thing. People of more age and experience expect, and are entitled to, that degree of deference.

There is a *bienséance* also with regard to people of the lowest degree; a gentleman observes it with his footman, even with the beggar in the street. He considers them as objects of compassion, not of insult; he speaks to neither *d'un ton brusque*, but corrects the one coolly, and refuses the other with humanity. There is no one occasion in the world, in which *le ton brusque* is becoming a gentleman. In short, *les bienséances* are another word for *manners*, and extend to

every part of life. They are propriety; the Graces should attend in order to complete them. The Graces enable us to do, genteelly and pleasingly, what *les bienséances* require to be done at all. The latter are an obligation upon every man; the former are an infinite advantage and ornament to any man. May you unite both!

## MORE ABOUT THE WRITER'S EARLY DEFECTS AND HOW HE CURED THEM

LONDON, *June* 24, O.S. 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Air, address, manners, and graces are of such infinite advantage to whoever has them, and so peculiarly and essentially necessary for you, that now, as the time of our meeting draws near, I tremble for fear I should not find you possessed of them; and, to tell you the truth, I doubt you are not yet sufficiently convinced of their importance. There is, for instance, your intimate friend, Mr. H(ayes), who, with great merit, deep knowledge, and a thousand good qualities, will never make a figure in the world while he lives. Why? Merely for want of those external and showish accomplishments which he began the world too late to acquire; and which, with his studious and philosophical turn, I believe he thinks are not worth his attention. He may very probably make a figure in

the republic of letters; but he had ten thousand times better make a figure as a man of the world and of business in the republic of the United Provinces; which, take my word for it, he never will.

As I open myself, without the least reserve, whenever I think that my doing so can be of any use to you, I will give you a short account of myself when I first came into the world, which was at the age you are of now, so that (by the way) you have got the start of me in that important article by two or three years at least. At nineteen, I left the university of Cambridge, where I was an absolute pedant; when I talked my best, I quoted Horace; when I aimed at being facetious, I quoted Martial; and when I had a mind to be a fine gentleman, I talked Ovid. I was convinced that none but the ancients had common sense; that the classics contained everything that was either necessary, useful, or ornamental to men; and I was not without thoughts of wearing the *toga virilis* of the Romans, instead of the vulgar and illiberal dress of the moderns. With these excellent notions, I went first to the Hague, where, by the help of several letters of recommendation, I was soon introduced into all the best company, and where I very soon discovered that I was totally mistaken in almost every one notion I had entertained. Fortunately I had a strong desire to please (the mixed result of good-nature, and a vanity by no means blameable), and was sensible that I had nothing but the desire. I therefore resolved, if

possible, to acquire the means too. I studied attentively and minutely the dress, the air, the manner, the address, and the turn of conversation of all those whom I found to be the people in fashion, and most generally allowed to please. I imitated them as well as I could; if I heard that one man was reckoned remarkably genteel, I carefully watched his dress, motions, and attitudes, and formed my own upon them. When I heard of another whose conversation was agreeable and engaging, I listened and attended to the turn of it. I addressed myself, though *de très mauvaise grace*, to all the most fashionable fine ladies; confessed and laughed with them at my own awkwardness and rawness, recommending myself as an object for them to try their skill in forming.

By these means, and with a passionate desire of pleasing everybody, I came by degrees to please some; and I can assure you, that what little figure I have made in the world, has been much more owing to that passionate desire I had of pleasing universally, than to any intrinsic merit or sound knowledge I might ever have been master of. My passion for pleasing was so strong (and I am very glad it was so), that I own to you fairly, I wished to make every woman I saw in love with me, and every man I met with admire me. Without this passion for the object, I should never have been so attentive to the means; and I own I cannot conceive how it is possible for any man of good-nature and good sense to be without this

passion. Does not good-nature incline us to please all those we converse with, of whatever rank or station they may be? And does not good sense and common observation show of what infinite use it is to please? Oh! but one may please by the good qualities of the heart, and the knowledge of the head, without that fashionable air, address, and manner, which is mere tinsel. I deny it. A man may be esteemed and respected, but I defy him to please without them. Moreover, at your age, I would not have contented myself with barely pleasing; I wanted to shine and to distinguish myself in the world as a man of fashion and gallantry, as well as business. And that ambition or vanity, call it what you please, was a right one; it hurt nobody, and made me exert whatever talents I had. It is the spring of a thousand right and good things.

I was talking you over the other day with one very much your friend, and who had often been with you, both at Paris and in Italy. Among the innumerable questions which you may be sure I asked him concerning you, I happened to mention your dress (for, to say the truth, it was the only thing of which I thought him a competent judge), upon which he said that you dressed tolerably well at Paris; but that in Italy you dressed so ill, that he used to joke with you upon it, and even to tear your clothes. Now, I must tell you, that at your age it is as ridiculous not to be very well dressed, as at my age it would be if I were to wear a

white feather and red-heeled shoes. Dress is one of the various ingredients that contribute to the art of pleasing; it pleases the eyes at least, and more especially of women. Address yourself to the senses if you would please; dazzle the eyes, soothe and flatter the ears of mankind; engage their heart, and let their reason do its worst against you. *Suaviter in modo* is the great secret. Whenever you find yourself engaged insensibly in favour of anybody of no superior merit or distinguished talent, examine and see what it is that has made those impressions upon you: you will find it to be that *douceur*, that gentleness of manners, that air and address, which I have so often recommended to you; and from thence draw this obvious conclusion, that what pleases you in them will please others in you; for we are all made of the same clay, though some of the lumps are a little finer, and some a little coarser; but, in general, the surest way to judge of others is to examine and analyse one's self thoroughly. When we meet, I will assist you in that analysis, in which every man wants some assistance against his own self-love. Adieu!

## ON LETTER WRITING

LONDON, *December* 19, O.S. 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are now entered upon a scene of business, where I hope you will one day make a figure.[1] Use does a great deal, but care and attention must be joined to it. The first thing necessary in writing letters of business is extreme clearness and perspicuity; every paragraph should be so clear and unambiguous, that the dullest fellow in the world may not be able to mistake it, nor obliged to read it twice in order to understand it. This necessary clearness implies a correctness, without excluding an elegancy of style. Tropes, figures, antitheses, epigrams, etc., would be as misplaced and as impertinent in letters of business, as they are sometimes (if judiciously used) proper and pleasing in familiar letters, upon common and trite subjects. In business, an elegant simplicity, the result of care, not of labour, is required. Business must be well, not affectedly, dressed, but by no means negligently. Let your first attention be to clearness, and read every paragraph after you have written it, in the critical view of discovering whether it is possible that any one man can mistake the true sense of it; and correct it accordingly.

[1] Mr. Stanhope, after a visit with his father in England, had returned to Paris as an attaché to Lord Albemarle's embassy.

Our pronouns and relatives often create obscurity or ambiguity; be therefore exceedingly attentive to them, and take care to mark out with precision their particular relations. For example: Mr. Johnson acquainted me that he had seen Mr. Smith, who had promised him to speak to Mr. Clarke, to return him (Mr. Johnson) those papers which he (Mr. Smith) had left some time ago with him (Mr. Clarke); it is better to repeat a name, though unnecessarily, ten times, than to have the person mistaken once. *Who*, you know, is singly relative to persons, and cannot be applied to things; *which* and *that* are chiefly relative to things, but not absolutely exclusive of persons; for one may say, the man *that* robbed or killed such-a-one; but it is much better to say, the man *who* robbed or killed. One never says, the man or the woman *which*. *Which* and *that*, though chiefly relative to things, cannot be always used indifferently as to things; and the ευφονια must sometimes determine their place. For instance: The letter *which* I received from you, *which* you referred to in your last, *which* came by Lord Albemarle's messenger, and *which* I showed to such-a-one; I would change it thus: The letter *that* I received from you, *which* you referred to in your last, *that* came by Lord Albemarle's messenger, and *which* I showed to such-a-one.

Business does not exclude (as possibly you wish it did) the usual terms of politeness and good-breeding, but, on the contrary, strictly requires them; such as,

*I have the honour to acquaint your Lordship; Permit me to assure you; If I may be allowed to give my opinion, etc.* For the Minister abroad, who writes to the Minister at home, writes to his superior; possibly to his patron, or at least to one who he desires should be so.

Letters of business will not only admit of, but be the better for *certain graces;* but then, they must be scattered with a sparing and a skilful hand; they must fit their place exactly. They must decently adorn without encumbering, and modestly shine without glaring. But as this is the utmost degree of perfection in letters of business, I would not advise you to attempt those embellishments till you have first laid your foundation well.

Cardinal d'Ossat's letters are the true letters of business; those of Monsieur D'Avaux are excellent; Sir William Temple's are very pleasing, but I fear too affected. Carefully avoid all Greek or Latin quotations; and bring no precedents from the *virtuous Spartans, the polite Athenians, and the brave Romans.* Leave all that to futile pedants. No flourishes, no declamation. But (I repeat it again) there is an elegant simplicity and dignity of style absolutely necessary for good letters of business; attend to that carefully. Let your periods be harmonious, without seeming to be laboured; and let them not be too long, for that always occasions a degree of obscurity. I should not mention correct orthography, but that

you very often fail in that particular, which will bring ridicule upon you; for no man is allowed to spell ill. I wish too that your handwriting were much better, and I cannot conceive why it is not, since every man may certainly write whatever hand he pleases. Neatness in folding up, sealing, and directing your packets, is by no means to be neglected; though I dare say you think it is. But there is something in the exterior, even of a packet, that may please or displease; and consequently worth some attention.

You say that your time is very well employed, and so it is, though as yet only in the outlines, and first *routine* of business. They are previously necessary to be known; they smooth the way for parts and dexterity. Business requires no conjuration nor supernatural talents, as people unacquainted with it are apt to think. Method, diligence, and discretion will carry a man of good strong common sense much higher than the finest parts, without them, can do. *Par negotiis, neque supra,* is the true character of a man of business; but then it implies ready attention, and no *absences;* and a flexibility and versatility of attention from one object to another, without being engrossed by any one.

Be upon your guard against the pedantry and affectation of business, which young people are apt to fall into, from the pride of being concerned in it young. They look thoughtful, complain of the weight of busi-

ness, throw out mysterious hints, and seem big with secrets which they do not know. Do you on the contrary never talk of business but to those with whom you are to transact it; and learn to seem *vacuus* and idle when you have the most business. Of all things, the *volto sciolto* and the *pensieri stretti* are necessary. Adieu!

## ENGLISH AND FRENCH PLAYS COMPARED

LONDON, *January* 23, O.S. 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Have you seen the new tragedy of *Varon* and what do you think of it? Let me know, for I am determined to form my taste upon yours. I hear that the situations and incidents are well brought on, and the catastrophe unexpected and surprising, but the verses bad. I suppose it is the subject of all the conversations at Paris, where both women and men are judges and critics of all such performances; such conversations, that both form and improve the taste and whet the judgment, are surely preferable to the conversations of our mixed companies here; which, if they happen to rise above bragg[1] and whist, infallibly stop short of everything either pleasing or instructive. I take the reason of this to be, that (as women generally give the tone to the conversation) our English women

[1] *Bragg*, an old English game at cards, which in its essentials resembles the great American game of poker.

are not near so well informed and cultivated as the French; besides that they are naturally more serious and silent.

I could wish there were a treaty made between the French and the English theatres, in which both parties should make considerable concessions. The English ought to give up their notorious violations of all the unities, and all their massacres, racks, dead bodies, and mangled carcases, which they so frequently exhibit upon their stage. The French should engage to have more action and less declamation; and not to cram and crowd things together to almost a degree of impossibility, from a too scrupulous adherence to the unities. The English should restrain the licentiousness of their poets, and the French enlarge the liberty of theirs; their poets are the greatest slaves in their country, and that is a bold word; ours are the most tumultuous subjects in England, and that is saying a good deal. Under such regulations one might hope to see a play in which one should not be lulled to sleep by the length of a monotonical declamation, nor frightened and shocked by the barbarity of the action. The unity of time extended occasionally to three or four days, and the unity of place broke into, as far as the same street, or sometimes the same town; both which, I will affirm, are as probable as four-and-twenty hours and the same room.

More indulgence too, in my mind, should be shown, than the French are willing to allow, to bright thoughts

and to shining images; for though, I confess, it is not very natural for a Hero or a Princess to say fine things in all the violence of grief, love, rage, etc., yet I can as well suppose that, as I can that they should talk to themselves for half-an-hour, which they must necessarily do or no tragedy could be carried on, unless they had recourse to a much greater absurdity, the choruses of the ancients. Tragedy is of a nature, that one must see it with a degree of self-deception; we must lend ourselves a little to the delusion; and I am very willing to carry that complaisance a little farther than the French do.

Tragedy must be something bigger than life, or it would not affect us. In nature, the most violent passions are silent; in Tragedy they must speak, and speak with dignity too. Hence the necessity of their being written in verse, and, unfortunately for the French, from the weakness of their language, in rhymes. And for the same reason, Cato, the Stoic, expiring at Utica, rhymes masculine and feminine at Paris, and fetches his last breath at London in most harmonious and correct blank verse.

It is quite otherwise with Comedy, which should be mere common life, and not one jot bigger. Every character should speak upon the stage, not only what it would utter in the situation there represented, but in the same manner in which it would express it. For which reason I cannot allow rhymes in Comedy, unless they were put into the mouth and came out of

the mouth of a mad poet. But it is impossible to deceive one's self enough (nor is it the least necessary in Comedy) to suppose a dull rogue of a usurer cheating, or *gros Jean* blundering in the finest rhymes in the world.

As for Operas, they are essentially too absurd and extravagant to mention; I look upon them as a magic scene, contrived to please the eyes and the ears at the expense of the understanding; and I consider singing, rhyming, and chiming Heroes, and Princesses and Philosophers, as I do the hills, the trees, the birds, and the beasts, who amicably joined in one common country dance to the irresistible tune of Orpheus's lyre. Whenever I go to an Opera, I leave my sense and reason at the door with my half-guinea, and deliver myself up to my eyes and my ears.

## AIM AT PERFECTION

LONDON, *February* 20, O.S. 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In all systems whatsoever, whether of religion, government, morals, etc., perfection is the object always proposed, though possibly unattainable — hitherto, at least, certainly unattained. However, those who aim carefully at the mark itself, will unquestionably come nearer to it than those who, from despair, negligence, or indolence, leave to chance the work of skill. The maxim holds equally true in common life; those who

aim at perfection will come infinitely nearer to it than those desponding or indolent spirits, who foolishly say to themselves — Nobody is perfect; perfection is unattainable; to attempt it is chimerical; I shall do as well as others; why then should I give myself trouble to be what I never can, and what, according to the common course of things, I need not be — *perfect?*

I am very sure that I need not point out to you the weakness and the folly of this reasoning, if it deserves the name of reasoning. It would discourage, and put a stop to the exertion of any one of our faculties. On the contrary, a man of sense and spirit says to himself, Though the point of perfection may (considering the imperfection of our nature) be unattainable, my care, my endeavours, my attention, shall not be wanting to get as near it as I can. I will approach it every day; possibly I may arrive at it at last; at least (what I am sure is in my own power) I will not be distanced. Many fools (speaking of you) say to me, What, would you have him perfect? I answer, Why not? What hurt would it do him or me? Oh, but that is impossible, say they. I reply, I am not sure of that; perfection in the abstract I admit to be unattainable; but what is commonly called perfection in a character, I maintain to be attainable, and not only that, but in every man's power. He has, continue they, a good head, a good heart, a good fund of knowledge, which will increase daily; what would you have more? Why, I would have everything more that can

adorn and complete a character. Will it do his head, his heart, or his knowledge, any harm, to have the utmost delicacy of manners, the most shining advantages of air and address, the most endearing attentions, and the most engaging graces? But as he is, say they, he is loved wherever he is known. I am very glad of it, say I; but I would have him be liked before he is known, and loved afterwards. I would have him, by his first *abord* and address, make people wish to know him, and inclined to love him; he will save a great deal of time by it. Indeed, reply they, you are too nice, too exact, and lay too much stress upon things that are of very little consequence. Indeed, rejoin I, you know very little of the nature of mankind, if you take those things to be of little consequence; one cannot be too attentive to them; it is they that always engage the heart, of which the understanding is commonly the bubble. And I would much rather that he erred in a point of grammar, of history, of philosophy, etc., than in a point of manners and address. But consider, he is very young, all this will come in time. I hope so; but that time must be while he is young, or it will never be at all; the right *pli* must be taken young, or it will never be easy, nor seem natural. Come, come, say they (substituting, as is frequently done, assertion instead of argument) depend upon it he will do very well; and you have a great deal of reason to be satisfied with him. I hope and believe he will do well, but I would have

him to do better than well. I am very well pleased with him, but I would be more, I would be proud of him. I would have him have lustre as well as weight. Did you ever know any body that re-united all these talents? Yes, I did; Lord Bolingbroke joined all the politeness, the manners, and the graces of a courtier, to the solidity of a statesman, and to the learning of a pedant. He was *omnis homo;* and pray what should hinder my boy from being so too, if he has, as I think he has, all the other qualifications that you allow him? Nothing can hinder him, but neglect of, or inattention to, those objects, which his own good sense must tell him are of infinite consequence to him, and which therefore I will not suppose him capable of either neglecting or despising.

This (to tell you the whole truth) is the result of a controversy that passed yesterday, between Lady Hervey and myself, upon your subject, and almost in the very words. I submit the decision of it to yourself; let your own good sense determine it, and make you act in consequence of that determination. The receipt to make this composition is short and infallible; here I give it you: —

Take variety of the best company, wherever you are; be minutely attentive to every word and action; imitate respectively those whom you observe to be distinguished and considered for any one accomplishment; then mix all those several accomplishments together, and serve them up yourself to others.

## THE WORLD THE ONLY SCHOOL

LONDON, *March* 16, O.S. 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

How do you go on with the most useful and most necessary of all studies, the study of the world? Do you find that you gain knowledge? And does your daily experience at once extend and demonstrate your improvement? You will possibly ask me how you can judge of that yourself. I will tell you a sure way of knowing. Examine yourself, and see whether your notions of the world are changed, by experience, from what they were two years ago in theory; for that alone is one favourable symptom of improvement. At that age (I remember it in myself) every notion that one forms is erroneous; one has seen few models, and those none of the best, to form one's self upon. One thinks that everything is to be carried by spirit and vigour; that art is meanness, and that versatility and complaisance are the refuge of pusillanimity and weakness. This most mistaken opinion gives an indelicacy, a *brusquerie*, and a roughness to the manners. Fools, who can never be undeceived, retain them as long as they live; reflection, with a little experience, makes men of sense shake them off soon. When they come to be a little better acquainted with themselves, and with their own species, they discover that plain right reason is, nine times in ten, the fettered and shackled

attendant of the triumph of the heart and passions; consequently they address themselves nine times in ten to the conqueror, not to the conquered; and conquerors, you know, must be applied to in the gentlest, the most engaging, and the most insinuating manner.

Have you discovered what variety of little things affect the heart, and how surely they collectively gain it? If you have you have made some progress. I would try a man's knowledge of the world as I would a schoolboy's knowledge of Horace; not by making him construe *Mæcenas atavis edite regibus*, which he could do in the first form, but by examining him as to the delicacy and *curiosa felicitas* of that poet. A man requires very little knowledge and experience of the world, to understand glaring, high-coloured, and decided characters; they are but few, and they strike at first; but to distinguish the almost imperceptible shades, and the nice gradations of virtue and vice, sense and folly, strength and weakness (of which characters are commonly composed), demands some experience, great observation, and minute attention. In the same cases, most people do the same things, but with this material difference, upon which the success commonly turns. — A man who has studied the world knows when to time, and where to place them; he has analysed the characters he applies to, and adapted his address and his arguments to them; but a man of what is called plain good sense, who has only reasoned by himself, and not acted with mankind, mistimes,

misplaces, runs precipitately and bluntly at the mark, and falls upon his nose in the way.

In the common manners of social life, every man of common sense has the rudiments, the A B C of civility; the means not to offend; and even wishes to please; and, if he has any real merit, will be received and tolerated in good company. But that is far from being enough; for though he may be received, he will never be desired; though he does not offend, he will never be loved; but, like some little, insignificant, neutral power, surrounded by great ones, he will neither be feared nor courted by any; but by turns invaded by all whenever it is their interest. A most contemptible situation! Whereas, a man who has carefully attended to, and experienced the various workings of the heart, and the artifices of the head; and who by one shade can trace the progression of the whole colour; who can, at the proper times, employ all the several means of persuading the understanding, and engaging the heart; may and will have enemies, but will and must have friends; he may be opposed, but he will be supported too; his talents may excite the jealousy of some, but his engaging hearts will make him beloved by many more; he will be considerable, he will be considered.

Many different qualifications must conspire to form such a man, and to make him at once respectable and amiable, and the least must be joined to the greatest; the latter would be unavailing without the former; and

the former would be futile and frivolous without the latter. Learning is acquired by reading books; but the much more necessary learning, the knowledge of the world, is only to be acquired by reading men, and studying all the various editions of them. Many words in every language are generally thought to be synonymous; but those who study the language attentively will find that there is no such thing; they will discover some little difference, some distinction, between all those words that are vulgarly called synonymous; one has always more energy, extent, or delicacy, than another; it is the same with men; all are in general, and yet no two in particular, exactly alike. Those who have not accurately studied, perpetually mistake them; they do not discern the shades and gradations that distinguish characters seemingly alike. Company, various company, is the only school for this knowledge. You ought to be by this time at least in the third form of that school, from whence the rise to the uppermost is easy and quick; but then you must have application and vivacity; and you must not only bear with, but even seek, restraint in most companies, instead of stagnating in one or two only, where indolence and love of ease may be indulged.

## *AVOIR DU MONDE* EXPLAINED

LONDON, *April* 30, O.S. 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Avoir du monde* is, in my opinion, a very just and happy expression for having address, manners, and for knowing how to behave properly in all companies; and it implies very truly, that a man that has not these accomplishments, is not of the world. Without them, the best parts are inefficient, civility is absurd, and freedom offensive. A learned parson, rusting in his cell at Oxford or Cambridge, will reason admirably well upon the nature of man; will profoundly analyse the head, the heart, the reason, the will, the passions, the senses, the sentiments, and all those subdivisions of we know not what; and yet, unfortunately, he knows nothing of man, for he has not lived with him, and is ignorant of all the various modes, habits, prejudices, and tastes, that always influence and often determine him. He views man as he does colours in Sir Isaac Newton's prism, where only the capital ones are seen; but an experienced dyer knows all their various shades and gradations, together with the result of their several mixtures. Few men are of one plain, decided colour; most are mixed, shaded, and blended; and vary as much, from different situations, as changeable silks do from different lights.

The man *qui a du monde* knows all this from his

own experience and observation; the conceited cloister philosopher knows nothing of it from his own theory; his practice is absurd and improper, and he acts as awkwardly as a man would dance who had never seen others dance, nor learned of a dancing-master, but who had only studied the notes by which dances are now pricked down as well as tunes. Observe and imitate, then, the address, the arts, and the manners of those *qui ont du monde:* see by what methods they first make, and afterwards improve, impressions in their favour. Those impressions are much oftener owing to little causes than to intrinsic merit, which is less volatile, and has not so sudden an effect. Strong minds have undoubtedly an ascendant over weak ones, as Galigai Maréchale d'Ancre very justly observed, when, to the disgrace and reproach of those times, she was executed[1] for having governed Mary of Medicis by the arts of witchcraft and magic. But then ascendant is to be gained by degrees, and by those arts only which experience and the knowledge of the world teaches; for few are mean enough to be bullied, though most are weak enough to be bubbled. I have often seen people of superior, governed by people of much inferior, parts, without knowing or even suspecting that they were so governed. This can only happen when those people of inferior parts have more worldly dexterity and experience than those they govern. They see the weak and unguarded part, and apply to

[1] On the 8th of July, 1617.

it: they take it, and all the rest follows. Would you gain either men or women, and every man of sense desires to gain both, *il faut du monde.* You have had more opportunities than ever any man had, at your age, of acquiring *ce monde;* you have been in the best companies of most countries, at an age when others have hardly been in any company at all. You are master of all those languages which John Trott seldom speaks at all, and never well; consequently you need be a stranger nowhere. This is the way, and the only way, of having the *du monde;* but, if you have it not, and have still any coarse rusticity about you, may one not apply to you the *rusticus expectat* of Horace?

This knowledge of the world teaches us more particularly two things, both which are of infinite consequence, and to neither of which nature inclines us; I mean, the command of our temper, and of our countenance. A man who has no *monde* is inflamed with anger, or annihilated with shame, at every disagreeable incident; the one makes him act and talk like a madman, the other makes him look like a fool. But a man who has *du monde,* seems not to understand what he cannot or ought not to resent. If he makes a slip himself, he recovers it by his coolness, instead of plunging deeper by his confusion, like a stumbling horse. He is firm, but gentle; and practises that most excellent maxim, *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.* The other is the *volto sciolto e pensieri stretti.*

People, unused to the world, have babbling countenances; and are unskilful enough to show, what they have sense enough not to tell. In the course of the world, a man must very often put on an easy, frank countenance, upon very disagreeable occasions; he must seem pleased, when he is very much otherwise; he must be able to accost and receive with smiles, those whom he would much rather meet with swords. In Courts he must not turn himself inside out. All this may, nay must be done, without falsehood and treachery; for it must go no farther than politeness and manners, and must stop short of assurances and professions of simulated friendship. Good manners, to those one does not love, are no more a breach of truth, than "your humble servant," at the bottom of a challenge is; they are universally agreed upon, and understood to be things of course. They are necessary guards of the decency and peace of society; they must only act defensively; and then not with arms poisoned with perfidy. Truth, but not the whole truth, must be the invariable principle of every man, who has either religion, honour, or prudence. Those who violate it, may be cunning, but they are not able. Lies and perfidy are the refuge of fools and cowards. Adieu!

## ADAPTATION TO ENVIRONMENT—TABLE TALK

LONDON, *September* 22, 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The reception which you have met with at Hanover I look upon as an omen of your being well received everywhere else; for, to tell you the truth, it was the place that I distrusted the most in that particular. But there is a certain conduct, there are *certaines manières* that will, and must get the better of all difficulties of that kind. It is to acquire them that you still continue abroad, and go from Court to Court; they are personal, local, and temporal; they are modes which vary, and owe their existence to accidents, whim, and humour; all the sense and reason in the world would never point them out; nothing but experience, observation, and what is called knowledge of the world, can possibly teach them. For example, it is respectful to bow to the King of England; it is disrespectful to bow to the King of France; it is the rule to courtesy to the Emperor; and the prostration of the whole body is required by Eastern Monarchs. These are established ceremonies, and must be complied with; but why they were established, I defy sense and reason to tell us. It is the same among all ranks, where certain customs are received, and must necessarily be complied with, though by no means the result of sense and

reason. As for instance, the very absurd, though almost universal custom of drinking people's healths. Can there be anything in the world less relative to any other man's health than my drinking a glass of wine? Common sense, certainly, never pointed it out, but yet common sense tells me I must conform to it. Good sense bids one be civil, and endeavour to please, though nothing but experience and observation can teach one the means, properly adapted to time, place, and persons. This knowledge is the true object of a gentleman's travelling, if he travels as he ought to do. By frequenting good company in every country, he himself becomes of every country; he is no longer an Englishman, a Frenchman, or an Italian, but he is an European; he adopts, respectively, the best manners of every country, and is a Frenchman at Paris, an Italian at Rome, an Englishman at London.

This advantage, I must confess, very seldom accrues to my countrymen from their travelling, as they have neither the desire nor the means of getting into good company abroad; for, in the first place, they are confoundedly bashful, and in the next place, they either speak no foreign language at all, or, if they do, it is barbarously. You possess all the advantages that they want; you know the languages in perfection, and have constantly kept the best company in the places where you have been; so that you ought to be an European. Your canvas is solid and strong, your outlines are good; but remember, that you still want the beautiful

colouring of Titian, and the delicate graceful touches of Guido. Now is your time to get them. There is, in all good company, a fashionable air, countenance, manner, and phraseology, which can only be acquired by being in good company, and very attentive to all that passes there. When you dine or sup at any well-bred man's house, observe carefully how he does the honours of his table to the different guests. Attend to the compliments of congratulation, or condolence, that you hear a well-bred man make to his superiors, to his equals, and to his inferiors; watch even his countenance and his tone of voice, for they all conspire in the main point of pleasing. There is a certain distinguishing diction of a man of fashion; he will not content himself with saying, like John Trott, to a new-married man, Sir, I wish you much joy; or to a man who has lost his son, Sir, I am sorry for your loss; and both with a countenance equally unmoved; but he will say in effect the same thing, in a more elegant and less trivial manner, and with a countenance adapted to the occasion. He will advance with warmth, vivacity, and a cheerful countenance to the new-married man, and embracing him, perhaps say to him, "If you do justice to my attachment to you, you will judge of the joy that I feel upon this occasion better than I can express it," etc. To the other in affliction he will advance slowly, with a grave composure of countenance, in a more deliberate manner, and, with a lower voice, perhaps say, "I hope you do me the justice to be con-

vinced that I feel whatever you feel, and shall ever be affected where you are concerned."

Your *abord*, I must tell you, was too cold and uniform; I hope it is now mended. It should be respectfully open and cheerful with your superiors, warm and animated with your equals, hearty and free with your inferiors. There is a fashionable kind of *small talk*, that you should get; which, trifling as it is, is of use in mixed companies, and at table, especially in your foreign department; where it keeps off certain serious subjects, that might create disputes, or at least coldness for a time. Upon such occasions it is not amiss to know how to *parler cuisine*, and to be able to dissert upon the growth and flavour of wines. These, it is true, are very little things; but they are little things that occur very often, and therefore should be said *avec gentillesse et grace*. I am sure they must fall often in your way; pray take care to catch them. There is a certain language of conversation, a fashionable diction, of which every gentleman ought to be perfectly master, in whatever language he speaks. The French attend to it carefully, and with great reason; and their language, which is a language of phrases, helps them out exceedingly. That delicacy of diction is characteristical of a man of fashion and good company.

I could write folios upon this subject, and not exhaust it, but I think, and hope, that to you I need not. You have heard and seen enough, to be convinced of

the truth and importance of what I have been so long inculcating into you upon these points. How happy am I, and how happy are you, my dear child, that these Titian tints, and Guido graces, are all that you want to complete my hopes and your own character! But then, on the other hand, what a drawback would it be to that happiness, if you should never acquire them! I remember, when I was of your age, though I had not near so good an education as you have, or seen a quarter so much of the world, I observed those masterly touches, and irresistible graces in others, and saw the necessity of acquiring them myself; but then an awkward *mauvaise honte*, of which I had brought a great deal with me from Cambridge, made me ashamed to attempt it, especially if any of my countrymen and particular acquaintance were by. This was extremely absurd in me; for without attempting I could never succeed. But at last, insensibly, by frequenting a great deal of good company, and imitating those whom I saw that everybody liked, I formed myself *tant bien que mal.* For God's sake, let this last fine varnish, so necessary to give lustre to the whole piece, be the sole and single object now of your utmost attention. Berlin may contribute a great deal to it if you please; there are all the ingredients that compose it.

## MAXIMS:

ENCLOSED IN LETTER OF JANUARY 15, 1753

A proper secrecy is the only mystery of able men: mystery — the only secrecy of weak and cunning ones.

A man who tells nothing, or who tells all, will equally have nothing told him.

If a fool knows a secret, he tells it because he is a fool; if a knave knows one, he tells it wherever it is his interest to tell it. But women and young men are very apt to tell what secrets they know, from the vanity of having been trusted. Trust none of these whenever you can help it.

Inattention to the present business, be it what it will; the doing one thing and thinking at the same time of another, or the attempting to do two things at once, are the never-failing signs of a little frivolous mind.

A man who cannot command his temper, his attention, and his countenance, should not think of being a man of business. The weakest man in the world can avail himself of the passion of the wisest. The inattentive man cannot know the business, and consequently cannot do it. And he who cannot command his countenance, may e'en as well tell his thoughts as show them.

Distrust all those who love you extremely upon a very slight acquaintance, and without any visible

reason. Be upon your guard, too, against those who confess as their weaknesses all the cardinal virtues.

In your friendships and in your enmities let your confidence and your hostilities have certain bounds: make not the former dangerous, nor the latter irreconcileable. There are strange vicissitudes in business!

Smooth your way to the head through the heart. The way of reason is a good one; but it is commonly something longer, and perhaps not so sure.

Spirit is now a very fashionable word: to act with spirit, to speak with spirit, means only to act rashly and to talk indiscreetly. An able man shows his spirit by gentle words and resolute actions; he is neither hot nor timid.

When a man of sense happens to be in that disagreeable situation, in which he is obliged to ask himself more than once, *What shall I do?* he will answer himself, Nothing. When his reason points out to him no good way, or at least no one way less bad than another, he will stop short and wait for light. A little busy mind runs on at all events, must be doing, and, like a blind horse, fears no dangers because he sees none. *Il faut sçavoir s'ennuyer.*

Patience is a most necessary qualification for business; many a man would rather you heard his story than granted his request. One must seem to hear the unreasonable demands of the petulant unmoved, and the tedious details of the dull untired. That is the least price that a man must pay for a high station.

It is always right to detect a fraud, and to perceive a folly; but it is often very wrong to expose either. A man of business should always have his eyes open, but must often seem to have them shut.

As Kings are begotten and born like other men, it is to be presumed that they are of the human species; and perhaps, had they the same education, they might prove like other men. But, flattered from their cradles, their hearts are corrupted and their heads are turned, so that they seem to be a species by themselves. No King ever said to himself, *Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto.*

Flattery cannot be too strong for them; drunk with it from their infancy, like old drinkers they require drams.

They prefer a personal attachment to a public service, and reward it better. They are vain and weak enough to look upon it as a free-will offering to their merit, and not as a burnt-sacrifice to their power.

If you would be a favourite of your King, address yourself to his weaknesses. An application to his reason will seldom prove very successful.

In Courts, bashfulness and timidity are as prejudicial on one hand, as impudence and rashness are on the other. A steady assurance and a cool intrepidity, with an exterior modesty, are the true and necessary medium.

Never apply for what you see very little probability of obtaining; for you will, by asking improper and

unattainable things, accustom the Ministers to refuse you so often, that they will find it easy to refuse you the properest and most reasonable ones. It is a common, but a most mistaken rule at Court, to ask for everything in order to get something: you do get something by it, it is true, but that something is refusals and ridicule.

There is a Court jargon, a chit-chat, a small talk, which turns singly upon trifles; and which, in a great many words, says little or nothing. It stands fools instead of what they cannot say, and men of sense instead of what they should not say. It is the proper language of levees, drawing-rooms, and antechambers: it is necessary to know it.

Whatever a man is at Court, he must be genteel and well-bred; that cloak covers as many follies as that of charity does sins. I knew a man of great quality, and in a great station at Court, considered and respected, whose highest character was that he was humbly proud and genteelly dull.

It is hard to say which is the greatest fool; he who tells the whole truth, or he who tells no truth at all. Character is as necessary in business as in trade. No man can deceive often in either.

At Court, people embrace without acquaintance, serve one another without friendship, and injure one another without hatred. Interest, not sentiment, is the growth of that soil.

A difference of opinion, though in the merest trifles,

alienates little minds, especially of high rank. It is full as easy to commend as to blame a great man's cook, or his tailor: it is shorter too; and the objects are no more worth disputing about than the people are worth disputing with. It is impossible to inform, but very easy to displease them.

A cheerful, easy countenance and behaviour, are very useful at Court; they make fools think you a good-natured man; and they make designing men think you an undesigning one.

There are some occasions in which a man must tell half his secret, in order to conceal the rest; but there is seldom one in which a man should tell it all. Great skill is necessary to know how far to go, and where to stop.

Ceremony is necessary in Courts, as the outwork and defence of manners.

Flattery, though a base coin, is the necessary pocket-money at Court; where, by custom and consent, it has obtained such a currency, that it is no longer a fraudulent, but a legal payment.

If a Minister refuses you a reasonable request, and either slights or injures you; if you have not the power to gratify your resentment, have the wisdom to conceal and dissemble it. Seeming good-humour on your part may prevent rancour on his, and perhaps bring things right again; but if you have the power to hurt, hint modestly, that if provoked, you may possibly have the will too. Fear, when real and well-founded, is

perhaps a more prevailing motive at Courts than love.

At Court, many more people can hurt than can help you; please the former, but engage the latter.

Awkwardness is a more real disadvantage than it is generally thought to be; it often occasions ridicule, it always lessens dignity.

A man's own good-breeding is his best security against other people's ill-manners.

Good-breeding carries along with it a dignity, that is respected by the most petulant. Ill-breeding invites and authorises the familiarity of the most timid. No man ever said a pert thing to the Duke of Marlborough. No man ever said a civil one (though many a flattering one) to Sir Robert Walpole.

When the old clipped money was called in for a new coinage in King William's time, to prevent the like for the future, they stamped on the edges of the crown-pieces these words: *et Decus et Tutamen.* That is exactly the case of good-breeding.

Knowledge may give weight, but accomplishments only give lustre; and many more people see than weigh.

Most arts require long study and application; but the most useful art of all, that of pleasing, requires only the desire.

It is to be presumed, that a man of common sense who does not desire to please, desires nothing at all; since he must know that he cannot obtain anything without it.

A skilful negotiator will most carefully distinguish between the little and the great objects of his business, and will be as frank and open in the former, as he will be secret and pertinacious in the latter.

He will, by his manners and address, endeavour, at least, to make his public adversaries his personal friends. He will flatter and engage the man, while he counterworks the Minister; and he will never alienate people's minds from him, by wrangling for points, either absolutely unattainable, or not worth attaining. He will make even a merit of giving up what he could not or would not carry, and sell a trifle for a thousand times its value.

A foreign minister should be a most exact economist; an expense proportioned to his appointments and fortune is necessary; but, on the other hand, debt is inevitable ruin to him. It sinks him into disgrace at the Court where he resides, and into the most servile and abject dependence on the Court that sent him. As he cannot resent ill-usage, he is sure to have enough of it.

The Duc de Sully observes very justly, in his Memoirs, that nothing contributed more to his rise than that prudent economy which he had observed from his youth, and by which he had always a sum of money beforehand, in case of emergencies.

The reputation of generosity is to be purchased pretty cheap; it does not depend so much upon a man's general expense, as it does upon his giving

handsomely where it is proper to give at all. A man, for instance, who should give a servant four shillings, would pass for covetous, while he who gave him a crown would be reckoned generous; so that the difference of those two opposite characters turns upon one shilling. A man's character in that particular depends a great deal upon the report of his own servants; a mere trifle above common wages makes their report favourable.

Take care always to form your establishment so much within your income, as to leave a sufficient fund for unexpected contingencies, and a prudent liberality. There is hardly a year in any man's life in which a small sum of ready money may not be employed to great advantage.[1]

## A TIRESOME MAN—MANNERS ADD LUSTRE TO LEARNING

LONDON, *May* 27, 1753.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have this day been tired, jaded, nay tormented, by the company of a most worthy, sensible, and learned man, a near relation of mine, who dined and passed the evening with me. This seems a paradox, but is a plain truth; he has no knowledge of the world, no

[1] Upon the back of the original was written, in Mr. Stanhope's hand, "Excellent Maxims, but more calculated for the meridian of France or Spain than of England."

manners, no address; far from talking without book, as is commonly said of people who talk sillily, he only talks by book; which, in general conversation, is ten times worse. He has formed in his own closet, from books, certain systems of everything, argues tenaciously upon those principles, and is both surprised and angry at whatever deviates from them. His theories are good, but unfortunately are all impracticable. Why? Because he has only read and not conversed. He is acquainted with books and an absolute stranger to men. Labouring with his matter, he is delivered of it with pangs; he hesitates, stops in his utterance, and always expresses himself inelegantly. His actions are all ungraceful; so that, with all his merit and knowledge, I would rather converse six hours with the most frivolous tittle-tattle woman, who knew something of the world, than with him.

The preposterous notions of a systematical man, who does not know the world, tire the patience of a man who does. It would be endless to correct his mistakes, nor would he take it kindly; for he has considered everything deliberately, and is very sure that he is in the right. Impropriety is a characteristic, and a never-failing one, of these people. Regardless, because ignorant, of customs and manners, they violate them every moment. They often shock, though they never mean to offend; never attending either to the general character, or the particular distinguishing circumstances of the people to whom, or

before whom, they talk; whereas the knowledge of the world teaches one, that the very same things which are exceedingly right and proper in one company, time, and place, are exceedingly absurd in others. In short, a man who has great knowledge from experience and observation, of the characters, customs, and manners of mankind, is a being as different from and as superior to a man of mere book and systematical knowledge, as a well-managed horse is to an ass. Study, therefore, cultivate and frequent men and women; not only in their outward, and consequently guarded, but in their interior, domestic, and consequently less disguised characters and manners.

Take your notions of things as by observation and experience you find they really are, and not as you read that they are or should be; for they never are quite what they should be. For this purpose, do not content yourself with general and common acquaintance; but, wherever you can, establish yourself, with a kind of domestic familiarity, in good houses. For instance, go again to Orli for two or three days, and so at two or three *reprises*. Go and stay two or three days at a time at Versailles, and improve and extend the acquaintance you have there. Be at home at St. Cloud; and whenever any private person of fashion invites you to pass a few days at his country-house, accept of the invitation. This will necessarily give you a versatility of mind, and a facility to adopt various manners and customs; for everybody desires to please

those in whose house they are; and people are only to be pleased in their own way. Nothing is more engaging than a cheerful and easy conformity to people's particular manners, habits, and even weaknesses; nothing (to use a vulgar expression) should come amiss to a young fellow. He should be, for good purposes, what Alcibiades was commonly for bad ones, a Proteus, assuming with ease, and wearing with cheerfulness, any shape. Heat, cold, luxury, abstinence, gravity, gaiety, ceremony, easiness, learning, trifling, business, and pleasure, are modes which he should be able to take, lay aside, or change occasionally, with as much ease as he would take or lay aside his hat. All this is only to be acquired by use and knowledge of the world, by keeping a great deal of company, analysing every character, and insinuating yourself into the familiarity of various acquaintance. A right, a generous ambition to make a figure in the world, necessarily gives the desire of pleasing; the desire of pleasing points out, to a great degree, the means of doing it; and the art of pleasing is, in truth, the art of rising, of distinguishing one's self, of making a figure and a fortune in the world. But without pleasing, without the Graces, as I have told you a thousand times, *ogni fatta è vana.*

You are now but nineteen, an age at which most of your countrymen are illiberally getting drunk in port at the University. You have greatly got the start of them in learning; and, if you can equally get the start

of them in the knowledge and manners of the world, you may be very sure of outrunning them in Court and Parliament, as you set out so much earlier than they. They generally begin but to see the world at one-and-twenty; you will by that age have seen all Europe. They set out upon their travels unlicked cubs, and in their travels they only lick one another, for they seldom go into any other company. They know nothing but the English world, and the worst part of that too, and generally very little of any but the English language; and they come home at three or four-and-twenty refined and polished (as is said in one of Congreve's plays) like Dutch skippers from a whale-fishing.

The care which has been taken of you, and (to do you justice) the care you have taken of yourself, has left you, at the age of nineteen only, nothing to acquire but the knowledge of the world, manners, address, and those exterior accomplishments. But they are great and necessary acquisitions, to those who have sense enough to know their true value; and your getting them before you are one-and-twenty, and before you enter upon the active and shining scènes of life, will give you such an advantage over your contemporaries, that they cannot overtake you; they must be distanced. You may probably be placed about a young Prince, who will probably be a young King. There all the various arts of pleasing, the engaging address, the versatility of manners, the *brillant*, the Graces, will outweigh and yet outrun all solid knowledge and

unpolished merit. Oil yourself, therefore, and be both supple and shining for that race, if you would be first or early at the goal. Ladies will most probably too have something to say there; and those who are best with them will probably be best somewhere else. Labour this great point, my dear child, indefatigably; attend to the very smallest parts, the minutest graces, the most trifling circumstances, that can possibly concur in forming the shining character of a complete Gentleman, *un galant homme*, *un homme de Cour*, a man of business and pleasure; *estimé des hommes*, *recherché des femmes*, *aimé de tout le monde*. In this view, observe the shining part of every man of fashion who is liked and esteemed; attend to, and imitate that particular accomplishment for which you hear him chiefly celebrated and distinguished; then collect those various parts, and make yourself a Mosaic of the whole. No one body possesses everything, and almost everybody possesses some one thing worthy of imitation; only choose your models well; and, in order to do so, choose by your ear more than by your eye. The best model is always that which is most universally allowed to be the best, though in strictness it may possibly not be so. We must take most things as they are, we cannot make them what we would, nor often what they should be; and, where moral duties are not concerned, it is more prudent to follow than to attempt to lead. Adieu!

# LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS TO HIS GODSON

## A GIFT TO THE GODSON FOR HIS FIRST LETTER

LONDON *July y*e 28th 1761.

DEAR GODSON,

I was agreeably surprised with receiving your letter written all with your own hand, which at five years and a half is, upon my word, a great performance. What will not that Herculean hand of yours so red and so blue do in time, that can do so much already? Seriously, I see that you have been a very good boy, and have applied yourself to your book, for I take it for granted that your reading keeps pace at least with your writing. I do not know if you remember (but I am apt to think you do) that I promised to send you a watch for the first letter you should write to me with your own hand. Now as a Man of Honour performs whatever he has promised, even without being put in mind of it, I have bought you a watch which I will send you by the first opportunity. It is not, as you will find, a very costly one; but perhaps it may an-

swer your present purposes as well as a better. You may, and I suppose will, set it and wind it up ten times a day, and if you drop it upon the Forest it will be no great loss. You shall have one much better when you can talk and write French currently; and for every considerable improvement, I will give you something still much better. So that it will be your interest to take pains. Study heartily, and play vigorously; but always do one or the other, and never be idle. I hope you play often with the pictures upon your Globe, and ask your Papa a thousand questions about them, for they are as like as ever they can stare, to England, France, Spain, Italy, and every other Country in the world. You have likewise the pictures in Ovid's Metamorphoses to play with for variety. There you will find Jupiter with his Eagle and his thunder-bolt, Juno with a fine tame Peacock, Venus with a pair of very pretty turtle Doves, and Diana who carrys half the Moon upon her head, and a bow and arrow in her hand. If I were you, I would ask Papa several questions about those people, as who they are, and what is their business.

*Bon soir petit Drôle, et aimez moy, car je vous aime beaucoup. Adieu.*

CHESTERFIELD.

This last line is for you, and your first Minister Jack, to lay your heads together about.

## DIVERSION ORDERED, STUDY REQUESTED, IGNORANCE DESPISED

LONDON *Nov.* 3d 1761.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR,

See how punctual I am. I received your letter but yesterday, and I do myself the honour of answering it to day. You tell me that when you are at Monsieur Robert's, you will obey my orders, but that is a very unlimited engagement, for how do you know what orders I shall give you? As for example, suppose I should order you to play and divert yourself heartily, would you do it? And yet that will be one of my orders. It is true I shall desire you at your Leisure hours, to mind your reading, your writing, and your French, but that will be only a request, which you may comply with or not as you please; for no man who does not desire to know, and to be esteemed in the world, should be forced to it, for it is punishment enough to be a blockhead, and to be despised in all companies.

I fancy you have a good memory, and from time to time, young as it is, I shall put it to the trial; for whatever you get by heart at this age you will remember as long as you live, and therefore I send you these fine verses of Mr. Dryden, and give you a whole month to get them by heart.

When I consider Life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet fool'd with hope, Men favour the deceit,
Trust on, and think tomorrow will repay,
Tomorrow's falser than the former day;
Lies worse, and when it bids us most be blest,
With some new hope, cuts off what we possest.
Fond cozenage this, who'd live past years again?
Yet all hope pleasure from what still remain;
And from the dregs of life, think to receive,
What the first sprightly runnings could not give.
I'm tired of seeking for this chymick gold,
Which fools us young, and beggars us when old.[1]

And so God bless you. CHESTERFIELD.

## DUTY TO GOD AND DUTY TO MAN

*Aug.* 2 [1762].

DEAR PHIL,

Though I generally write to you upon those subjects which you are now chiefly employed in, such as History, Geography, and French, yet I must from time to time remind you of two much more important duties which I hope you will never forget, nor neglect. I mean your duty to God, and your duty to Man. God has been so good as to write in all our hearts, the duty that he expects from us; which is adoration and thanksgiving, and doing all the good we can to our fellow creatures. Our conscience, if we will but consult and attend to it, never fails to remind

[1] *Aurengzebe*, Act IV, Scene I.

us of those duties. I dare say that you feel an inward pleasure when you have learned your book well, and have been a good boy, as on the other hand I am sure you feel an inward uneasiness when you have not done so. This is called *conscience*, which I hope you will always consult and follow. You owe all the advantages you enjoy to God, who can and who probably will, take them away, whenever you are ungrateful to him, for he has Justice as well as Mercy. Get by heart the four following and excellent lines of Voltaire, and retain them in your mind as long as you live.

> Dieu nous donna les biens, il veut qu'on en jouisse,
> Mais n'oubliés Jamais leur cause et leur Auteur;
> Et quand vous goutez sa Divine faveur,
> O Mortels, gardez vous d'oublier sa Justice.

Your duty to Man is very short and clear, it is only to do to him whatever you would be willing that he should do to you. And remember in all the business of your life, to ask your conscience this question, *Should I be willing that this should be done to me?* If your conscience, which will always tell you truth, answers NO, do not do that thing. Observe these rules, and you will be happy in this world, and still happier in the next. *Bon soir mon petit bout d'homme.*

CHESTERFIELD.

## THE DUTY OF PLEASING

BLACKHEATH, *Aug. ye 11th*, 1762.

DEAR PHIL,

In my last, I mentioned to you your duty, towards God, and towards [men], which I hope you will both remember and practise, and then you will be esteemed and respected by all good Men. But there is a lesser duty, which I would have you study and observe, that you may be loved by all mankind. I mean the duty of *pleasing*. I dare say you love to be pleased; then should you not endeavour to please others; this is but doing as you would be done by. You can only please by attention, complaisance, a gentleness and sweetness of manners, a civility upon all occasions, and a cheerful and engaging countenance. Observe attentively what pleases you in others, and do the same, and you will be sure to please them.

CHESTERFIELD.

## ROUGH MANNERS: JOHN TROTT, THE TWO-LEGGED BEAR

BLACKHEATH, *Aug^st. ye* 18 [1762].

DEAR PHIL,

I cannot enough inculcate into you, the absolute necessity, and infinite advantages of pleasing, that is *d'être aimable;* and it is so easy to be so, that I

am surprised at the folly, or stupidity of those who neglect it. The first great step towards pleasing, is to desire to please, and whoever really desires it, will please to a certain degree. *La douceur et la politesse dans l'air et dans les manières plairont toujours.* I am very sorry to tell you that you have not *l'air de la politesse;* for you have got an odious trick of not looking people in the face, who speak to you, or whom you speak to. This is a most shocking trick, and implies guilt, fear, or inattention, and you must absolutely be cured of it, or nobody will love you. You know what stress, both your Father and I lay upon it, and we shall neither of us love you, till you are broke of it. I am sure you would not be called John Trott, and both I and others will call you so, if you are not more attentive and Polite. I believe you do not know who this same John Trott is. He is a Character in a play, of a Brutal Bearish Englishman; for there are English two legged Bears, and but too many of them. He is rude, inattentive, and rough, seldom bows to people, and never looks them in the face. After this description of him, tell me which would you choose to be called, John Trott, or a well bred gentleman. *C'est a dire voudriez vous être aimable, ou brutal. Il n'y a point de milieu, il faut opter, et être l'un ou l'autre.* I know which you will choose, I am sure you will desire and endeavour to be *Aimable.*

CHESTERFIELD.

## WELL-BRED GENTLEMAN

*Monday morning* [1762].

DEAR PHIL,

You say that you will not be John Trott, and you are in the right of it, for I should be very sorry to call you John Trott, and should not love you half so well as I do, if you deserved that name. The lowest and the poorest people in the world, expect good breeding from a Gentleman, and they have a right to it; for they are by nature your equals, and are no otherwise your inferiors than by their education and their fortune. Therefore whenever you speak to people who are no otherwise your inferiors than by these circumstances, you must remember to look them in the face and to speak to them with great humanity and *douceur*, or else they will think you proud and hate you. I am sure you would rather be loved, than either hated or laughed at, and yet I can assure [you] that you will be either hated or laughed at, if you do not make yourself *Aimable*. You will ask me perhaps what you must do to be *Aimable?* Do but resolve to be so, and the business is almost done. *Ayez seulement de la Politesse, de la Douceur, et des attentions, et je vous reponds que vous serez aimé, et d'autant plus, que les Anglois ne sont pas généralement aimables.* Among attentions, one of the most material ones, is to look people in the face when they speak to you, or

when you speak to them, and this I insist upon your doing, or upon my word I shall be very angry. Another thing I charge you always to do; which is, when you come into a room, or go out of it, to make a bow to the company. All this I dare say you will do, because I am sure that you would rather be called a well-bred Gentleman, than John Trott. I therefore send you this pocketbook, and will one day this week send for you to dine with me at Blackheath before the days grow too short. *Adieu soyez honnête homme.*

CHESTERFIELD.

## SOME RULES FOR THE BEHAVIOUR OF A WELL-BRED GENTLEMAN

[1762.]

DEAR PHIL,

As I know that you desire to be a well bred Gentleman, and not a two-legged Bear, and to be beloved, instead of being hated or laughed at, I send you some general rules for your behaviour, which will make you not only beloved but admired. You must have great attention to everything that passes where you are, in order to do what will be most agreeable to the company.

Whoever you speak to, or whoever speaks to you, you must be sure to look them full in the face. For it is not only ill bred, but brutal, either to look upon the ground, or to have your eyes wandering about

the room, when people are speaking to you, or you are speaking to them. When people speak to you, though they do not directly ask you a question, you must give them an answer, and not let them think that you are deaf, or that you do not care what they say. For example if a person says to you *this* [*is*] *a very hot day*, you must say, Yes or No Sir.

You must call every gentleman, Sir, or My Lord, and every Woman, Madam.

When you are at dinner you must sit upright in your chair, and not loll. And when anybody offers to help you to anything if you will have it you must say, *yes if you will be so good*, or *I am ashamed to give you so much trouble*. If you will not have it, you must say, *no thank you*, or, *I am very much obliged to you*. You must drink first to the Mistress of the House and next to the Master of it.

When you first come into a room you must not fail to make a bow to the company, and also when you go out of it.

You must never look sullen or pouting, but have a cheerful easy countenance.

Remember that there is no one thing so necessary for a Gentleman as to be perfectly civil and well bred; nobody was ever loved that was not well-bred; and to tell you the truth, neither your Papa nor I shall love you, if you are not well-bred, and I am sure you desire that we should both love you, as we do now, because you are a very good boy. And so God bless you.

## ATTENTION TO LEARNING: *HOC AGE*

BLACKHEATH, *September* 2, 1762.

DEAR PHIL,

I send you here enclosed a letter from your father, which I desire you will read often, and with care and attention. You will find in it, all that he desires you should do, and all that he requires you should not do. I know that you love your father, and I know besides that you are the best-natured boy in the world, and therefore I now tell you, that you will break your father's heart, if you do not observe all the directions he gives you in this letter, and I am sure you would not do that upon any account. He recommends to you particularly attention to your learning, and so do I; but I do not desire that you should be gravely dull. No; be gay, lively, play, run, and be as noisy as you please, when you have done with your book, but when you are learning think of nothing but of what you are learning, and you will play afterwards with much more pleasure when your conscience tells you that you have done your duty, with attention. A boy of about your age, and a very good boy like you, told me the other day, that he could not play with any pleasure or satisfaction in the afternoon, when he had not learned his book well in the morning. You know the meaning of these two Latin words, *Hoc age*, that is *do the thing, that you are doing, well.*

## THE ART OF SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

*Friday.*

My dear little boy, how goes thy little world of Marybone? Is the humming top a good one? Or do you like learning Latin better? Between you and me, Latin and a humming top do not seem to agree well together. A top is the plaything of a child, and Latin is the plaything of a young gentleman. Which of the two are you? Think, and act accordingly. You told me that you sometimes read Cicero. Go on with him, he writes both the best Latin and the best sense of any author. Besides he will best qualify you to make a figure one day in Parliament, which I dare say you would wish to do, but which no man can do, unless he is an eloquent speaker. Study therefore the art of speaking with propriety and elegance. Hitherto I own it is above your years, but have it always in your mind at least, speak as elegantly as you can now, and insensibly you will speak better and better every day, till you are of an age to study the principles of that useful and necessary art. The two great masters and models of it, were Demosthenes among the Greeks and Cicero among the Romans; and why should not you be so among the English? You may have a good chance for it if you please by application; and nothing can be done without application. I believe I have told you formerly what Charles the Twelfth of Sweden

used to say, that any man might do whatever he pleased by resolution and perseverance. . . . And to a certain degree that is true. I will recommend to you for your motto, *Volendo et perseverando.* Here is another good one: you may take your choice. *Aut nunquam tentes aut perfice.*

## FLAT CONTRADICTION A PROOF OF ILL-BREEDING — AN EPIGRAM BY BISHOP ATTERBURY — SIMILES AND METAPHORS

*July* 13, 1764.

I shall sometimes correspond with my giddy little boy in English,[1] that he may not be a stranger to his own language; for though it is very useful and becoming to a gentleman to speak several languages well, it is most absolutely necessary for him to speak his own native language correctly and elegantly, not to be laughed at in every company. It is a terrible thing to be ridiculous, and little things will make a man so. For instance, not writing, nor spelling well, makes any man ridiculous, but above all things being ill-bred makes a man not only ridiculous but hated. I am sure you know that it is your most important moral duty, to do to others what you would have them do to you, and would you have them civil to you and endeavour to please you? To be sure you would;

[1] Chesterfield wrote other letters in French.

consequently it is your duty as well as your interest, to be civil to, and to endeavour to please them. There is no greater mark of ill-breeding than contradicting people bluntly, and saying *No*, or, *it is not so;* and I will give you warning, that if you say so, you will be called Phil Trott of Mansfield, and perhaps you would never get off of that name as long as you live, for ridicule sticks a great while. When well-bred people contradict anybody, they say instead of *no, I ask pardon, but I take it to be otherwise*, or, *it seems to me to be the contrary;* but a flat *No* is as much the same as saying you lie; for which if you were a man you would be knocked down, and perhaps run through the body. To refresh your English, I send you here a pretty little gallant epigram, written upon a lady's fan by the late Bishop of Rochester, Dr. Atterbury.

Flavia the least and slightest toy,
Can with resistless art employ.
This fan in other hands would prove,
An engine of small force in love;
But she with matchless air and mien
Not to be told nor safely seen,
Directs its wanton motions so,
It wounds us more than Cupid's bow,
Gives coolness to the matchless dame,
To every other breast a flame.

This epigram you see turns upon the flame of love which is a common metaphor used by lovers, and the coolness that fanning gives. But you will naturally ask

me what is a metaphor, and I will tell you that it is a short simile, but then what is a simile? A simile is a comparison, as for example, if you should say that Charles the Twelfth of Sweden was as brave as a lion, that would be a simile, because you compare him to a lion; but if you said that Charles the Twelfth was a lion, that would be a metaphor, because you do not say that he was like a lion, but that he was a lion. Do you understand this? Good night my little boy, be attentive to your book, well-bred in company, and alive at your play. Be *totus in illis.*

To Master Stanhope
at Mr. Robert's School at Marybone by London.

## MORAL DUTIES AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Religious duties, or obligations, are to love God and keep His commandments, which He has in truth written in the heart of every rational creature. The ten commandments, which are often called the Decalogue, set forth all our religious, and most of our moral duties.

Moral duties, or obligations, are what we owe to our fellow creatures, that is, to all mankind. God has created us such helpless creatures, that we all want one another's assistance. Were you the only human creature upon earth, what would you do for food, clothes, beds to lie upon, and a house to live in? In

short for all the comforts of life? You could not procure them yourself. Since then you owe all these advantages to your fellow creatures, it is plainly your moral duty to repay them these obligations, by doing them all the good you can, by relieving to the utmost of your power their miseries and distresses, by indulgence, by charity, by loving them, which is called *philanthropy*. It was for this reason that our Almighty Creator made us with so many wants and infirmities, that mutual help and assistance are absolutely necessary not only for our well-being but for our being at all. The Christian religion carries our moral duties to greater perfection, and orders us to love our enemies, and to do good to those who use us ill. Now, as love or hate is not in our power, though our actions are, this commandment means no more, than that we should forgive those who use us ill, and that instead of resenting or revenging injuries, we should return good for evil. For example if my enemy were hungry, or naked, in sickness, or in pain, I would relieve him to the utmost of my power, and so would you I am sure, because you are a good-natured benevolent boy.

## DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THEY SHOULD DO UNTO YOU

My dear little Boy,

The desire of being pleased is universal, the desire of pleasing should be so too, it is included in that

great and fundamental principle of morality, of doing to others, what one wishes that they should do to us. There are indeed some moral duties of a much higher, but none of a more amiable nature, and I do not hesitate to place it at the head of what Cicero calls the *leniores virtutes*. The benevolent and feeling heart performs this duty with pleasure and in a manner that gives it, at the same time; but the great, the rich, and the powerful too often bestow their favours upon their inferiors, in the manner that they bestow their scraps upon their dogs, so as neither to oblige man nor dog.

It is no wonder if favours, benefits, and even charities, thus ungraciously bestowed, should be as coldly and faintly acknowledged. Gratitude is a burthen upon our imperfect nature, and we are but too willing to ease ourselves of it, or at least to lighten it as much as we can. The manner therefore of conferring favours or benefits, is, as to pleasing, almost as important as the matter itself. Take care then never to throw away the obligations which you may perhaps have it in your power to lay upon others, by an air of insolent protection, or by a cold, comfortless, and perfunctory manner, which stifles them in their birth. Humanity inclines, religion requires, and our moral duty obliges us, to relieve, as far as we are able, the distresses and miseries of our fellow creatures; but this is not all, for a true heartfelt benevolence and tenderness will prompt us to contribute what we can to their ease, their amusement, and their pleasure, as far as innocently we

may. Let us then not only scatter benefits, but even strew flowers for our fellow travellers, in the rugged ways of this wretched world. There are some, and but too many in this country more particularly, who without the least visible taint of ill-nature or malevolence, seem to be totally indifferent, and do not show the least desire to please, as on the other hand they never designedly offend. Whether this proceeds from a lazy, negligent, and listless disposition, from a gloomy and melancholic nature, from ill-health and low spirits, or from a secret and sullen pride, arising from the consciousness of their boasted liberty and independency, is hard to determine, considering the various movements of the human heart, and the wonderful errors of the human mind; but be the cause what it will, that neutrality which is the effect of it, makes these people, as neutralities always do, despicable and mere blanks in society. They would surely be roused from this indifference, if they would seriously consider the *infinite utility of pleasing*, which I shall do in my next.

BATH, *November* 7, 1765.

## CHEERFULNESS AND GOOD-HUMOUR — PASSIONATE ANGER

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

If you have not command enough over yourself to conquer your humour, as I hope you will, and as I am

sure every rational creature may have, never go into company while the fit of ill-humour is upon you. Instead of companies diverting you in those moments, you will displease and probably shock them, and you will part worse friends than you met. But whenever you find in yourself a disposition to sullenness, contradiction, or testiness, it will be in vain to seek for a cure abroad; stay at home, let your humour ferment and work itself off. Cheerfulness and good-humour are of all qualifications the most amiable in company, for though they do not necessarily imply good-nature and good-breeding, they act them at least very well, and that is all that is required in mixed company.

I have indeed known some very ill-natured people who are very good-humoured in company, but I never knew anybody generally ill-humoured in company, who was not essentially ill-natured. When there is no malevolence in the heart, there is always a cheerfulness and ease in the countenance and the manners. By good-humour and cheerfulness, I am far from meaning noisy mirth and loud peals of laughter, which are the distinguishing characteristics of the vulgar and the ill-bred, whose mirth is a kind of storm. Observe it, the vulgar often laugh, but never smile, whereas well-bred people often smile, and seldom or never laugh. A witty thing never excites laughter, it pleases only the mind and never distorts the countenance. A glaring absurdity, a blunder, a silly accident, and those things that are generally called comical may excite a

momentary laugh, though never a loud nor a long one among well-bred people. Sudden passion is called a short-lived madness; it is a madness indeed, but the fits of it generally return so often in choleric people that it may well be called a continual madness. Should you happen to be of this unfortunate disposition, which God forbid, make it your constant study to subdue, or at least to check it. When you find your choler rising, resolve neither to speak to, nor answer the person who excites it, but stay till you find it subsiding, and then speak deliberately. I have known many people, who by the rapidity of their speech have run away with themselves into a passion.

I will mention to you a trifling and perhaps you will think a ridiculous receipt, towards checking the excess of passion, of which I think that I have experienced the utility myself. Do everything in minuet time, speak, think, and move always in that measure, equally free from the dulness of slow, or the hurry and huddle of quick time. This movement moreover will allow you some moments to think forwards, and the Graces to accompany what you say or do, for they are never represented, as either running, or dozing. Observe a man in a passion, see his eyes glaring, his face inflamed, his limbs trembling, and his tongue stammering and faulting with rage, and then ask yourself calmly whether you would upon any account be that human wild beast. Such creatures are hated and dreaded in all companies where they are let loose, as

people do not choose to be exposed to the disagreeable necessity of either knocking down these brutes or being knocked down by them. Do on the contrary endeavour to be cool and steady upon all occasions. The advantages of such a steady calmness are innumerable, and would be too tedious to relate. It may be acquired by care and reflection. If it could not, that reason which distinguishes men from brutes, would be given us to very little purpose. As a proof of this I never saw, and scarcely ever heard of a Quaker in a passion. In truth there is in that sect, a decorum, a decency, and an amiable simplicity, that I know in no other. Having mentioned the *Graces* in this letter, I cannot end it, without recommending to you most earnestly the advice of the wisest of the ancients, to sacrifice to them devoutly and daily. When they are propitious they adorn everything and engage everybody. — But are they to be acquired?

Yes, to a certain degree they are, by attention, observation, and assiduous worship. Nature, I admit, must first have made you capable of adopting them, and then observation and imitation will make them in time your own. There are *graces* of the mind as well as of the body; the former give an easy engaging turn to the thoughts and the expressions, the latter to motions, attitude, and address. No man perhaps ever possessed them all; he would be too happy that did, but if you will attentively observe those graceful and engaging manners, which please you most in other

people, you may easily collect what will equally please others in you, and engage the majority of the *graces* on your side, insure the casting vote, and be returned *aimable*. There are people whom the *precieuse* of Molière, very justly, though very affectedly calls *les antipodes des graces*. If these unhappy people are formed by nature invincibly *maussades* and awkward, they are to be pitied, rather than blamed or ridiculed, but nature has disinherited few people to that degree.

## THE QUALITY OF TRUE WIT AND ITS JUDICIOUS USE

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

If God gives you wit, which I am not sure that I wish you, unless He gives you at the same time an equal portion at least of judgment to keep it in good order, wear it like your sword in the scabbard, and do not brandish it to the terror of the whole company. If you have real wit it will flow spontaneously and you need not aim at it, for in that case the rule of the Gospel is reversed, and it will prove, seek and you shall *not* find. Wit is so shining a quality, that everybody admires it, most people aim at it, all people fear it, and few love it unless in themselves. A man must have a good share of wit himself to endure a great share of it in another. When wit exerts itself in satire it is a most malignant distemper; wit it is true may be shown in satire, but satire does not constitute wit,

as most fools imagine it does. A man of real wit will find a thousand better occasions of showing it.

Abstain therefore most carefully from satire, which though it fall upon no particular person in company, and momentarily from the malignity of the human heart, pleases all; upon reflection it frightens all too, they think it may be their turn next, and will hate you for what they find you could say of them more, than be obliged to you for what you do not say. Fear and hatred are next-door neighbours. The more wit you have the more good nature and politeness you must show, to induce people to pardon your superiority, for that is no easy matter. Learn to shrink yourself to the size of the company you are in, take their tone whatever it may be, and excel in it if you can, but never pretend to give the tone; a free conversation will no more bear a dictator than a free government will.

The character of a man of wit is a shining one that every man would have if he could, though it is often attended by some inconveniencies; the dullest alderman even aims at it, cracks his dull joke, and thinks, or at least hopes that it is wit. But the denomination of *a wit*, is always formidable, and very often ridiculous. These titular *wits* have commonly much less wit, than petulance and presumption. They are at best *les rieurs de leur quartier*, in which narrow sphere they are at once feared and admired. You will perhaps ask me, and justly, how considering the delusions of self-love and vanity, from which no

man living is absolutely free, how you shall know whether you have wit or not. To which the best answer I can give you is, not to trust to the voice of your own judgment, for it will deceive you. Nor to your ears, which will always greedily receive flattery, if you are worth being flattered; but trust only to your eyes, and read in the countenances of good company, their approbation, or dislike of what you say. Observe carefully, too, whether you are sought for, solicited, and in a manner pressed into good company. But even all this will not absolutely ascertain your wit, therefore do not upon this encouragement flash your wit in people's faces *à ricochets*, in the shape of *bons mots*. Epigrams, smart repartées, etc., have rather less, than more, wit than you really have. A wise man will live at least as much within his wit as within his income. Content yourself with good sense and reason, which at long run are sure to please everybody who has either. If wit comes into the bargain, welcome it, but never invite it. Bear this truth always in your mind, that you may be admired for your wit if you have any, but that nothing but good sense and good qualities can make you be loved. They are substantial, everyday wear. Wit is for *les jours de gala*, where people go chiefly to be stared at.

## RAILLERY, MIMICRY, AND WAGS AND WITLINGS

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

There is a species of minor wit, which is much used and much more abused, I mean raillery. It is a most mischievous and dangerous weapon, when in unskilful or clumsy hands, and it is much safer to let it quite alone than to play with it, and yet almost everybody does play with it though they see daily the quarrels and heart burnings that it occasions. In truth it implys a supposed superiority, in the *railleur* to the *raillé*, which no man likes even the suspicion of in his own case, though it may divert him in other people's. An innocent *raillerie* is often inoffensively begun, but very seldom inoffensively ended, for that depends upon the *raillé* who, if he cannot defend himself well grows brutal, and if he can, very possibly his *railleur* baffled and disappointed becomes so. It is a sort of trial of wit, in which no man can patiently bear to have his inferiority made appear. The character of a *railleur* is more generally feared, and more heartily hated than any one I know in the world.

The injustice of a bad man is sooner forgiven than the insult of a witty one. The former only hurts one's liberty or property, but the latter hurts and mortifies that secret pride, which no human breast is free from. I will allow that there is a sort of raillery which may

not only be inoffensive but even flattering, as when by a genteel irony you accuse people of those imperfections which they are most notoriously free from, and consequently insinuate that they possess the contrary virtues. You may safely call Aristides a knave, or a very handsome woman an ugly one; but take care, that neither the man's character nor the lady's beauty, be in the least doubtful. But this sort of raillery requires a very light and steady hand to administer it. A little too rough, it may be mistaken into an offence, and a little too smooth, it may be thought a sneer, which is a most odious thing. There is another sort, I will not call it of wit, but rather of merriment and buffoonery, which is mimicry; the most successful mimic in the world is always the most absurd fellow, and an ape is infinitely his superior. His profession is to imitate and ridicule those natural defects and deformities for which no man is in the least accountable, and in their imitation of them, make themselves for the time as disagreeable and shocking as those they mimic.

But I will say no more of these creatures, who only amuse the lowest rabble of mankind. There is another sort of human animals, called *wags*, whose profession is to make the company laugh immoderately, and who always succeed provided the company consist of fools, but who are greatly disappointed in finding that they never can alter a muscle in the face of a man of sense. This is a most contemptible character, and never esteemed, even by those who are

silly enough to be diverted by them. Be content both for yourself, with sound good sense, and good manners, and let wit be thrown into the bargain where it is proper and inoffensive. Good sense will make you be esteemed, good manners be loved, and wit give a lustre to both. In whatever company you happen to be, whatever pleasures you are engaged in, though perhaps not of a very laudable kind, take great care to preserve a great personal dignity. I do not in the least mean a pride of birth or rank, that would be too silly, but I mean a dignity of character. Let your moral character of honesty and honour, be unblemished and even unsuspected; I have known some people dignify even their vices, first, by never boasting of them, and next by not practising them in an illiberal and indecent manner. . . . If they loved drinking too well, they did not practise at least that beastly vice in beastly company, but only indulged it sometimes in those companies whose wit and good-humour, in some degree seemed to excuse it, though nothing can justify it. When you see a drunken man, as probably you will see many, study him with attention, and ask yourself soberly whether you would upon any account, be that beast, that disgrace to human reason. The Lacedæmonians very wisely made their slaves drunk, to deter their children from being so, and with good effect, for nobody ever yet heard of a Lacedæmonian drunk.

## THE MANNERS OF A COXCOMB, AND THOSE OF A TIMID MAN

My dear little Boy,

If there is a lawful and proper object of raillery, it seems to be a coxcomb, as an usurper of the common rights of mankind. But here some precautions are necessary. Some wit, and great presumption constitute a coxcomb, for a true coxcomb must have parts. The most consummate coxcomb I ever knew, was a man of the most wit, but whose wit bloated with presumption, made him too big for any company, where he always usurped the seat of empire, and crowded out common sense. *Raillerie* seems to be a proper rod for these offenders, but great caution and skill are necessary in the use of it, or you may happen to catch a Tartar as they call it, and then the laughers will be against you. The best way with these people is to let them quite alone, and give them rope enough. On the other hand there are many, and perhaps more, who suffer from their timidity and *mauvaise honte*, which sink them infinitely below their level. Timidity is generally taken for stupidity, which for the most part it is not, but proceeds from a want of education in good company. Mr. Addison was the most timid and awkward man in good company I ever saw, and no wonder, for he had been wholly cloistered up in the cells of Oxford till he was five and twenty years

old. La Bruyère says, and there is a great deal of truth in it, *qu'on ne vaut dans ce monde que ce que l'on veut valoir;* for in this respect, mankind show great indulgence, and value people, at pretty near the price they set upon themselves, if it be not exorbitant. I could wish you to have a cool intrepid assurance with great seeming modesty. Never *démonté* and never forward. Very awkward timid people who have not been used to good company, are either ridiculously bashful or absurdly impudent. I have known many a man impudent from shamefacedness, endeavouring to act a reasonable assurance and lashing himself up to what he imagines to be a proper and easy behaviour. A very timid bashful man is annihilated in good company, especially of his superiors. He does not know what he says or does, and is in a ridiculous agitation both of body and mind. Avoid both these extremes, and endeavour to possess yourself with coolness and steadiness. Speak to the king with full as little concern, (though with more respect,) as you would to your equals. This is the distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman, and a man of the world. The way to acquire this most necessary behaviour, is as I have told you before, to keep company, whatever difficulty it may cost you at first, with your superiors, and with women of fashion; instead of taking refuge as too many young people do, in low and bad company, in order to avoid the restraint of good breeding. It is I confess, a pretty difficult, not to say an impossi-

ble thing, for a young man at his first appearance in the world, and unused to the ways and manners of it, not to be disconcerted and embarrassed; when he first comes into what is called the best company, he sees that they stare at him, and if they happen to laugh, he is sure that they laugh at him; this awkwardness is not to be blamed, as it often proceeds from laudable causes, from a modest diffidence of himself, and a consciousness of not yet knowing the modes and manners of good company; but let him persevere with a becoming modesty, and he will find that all people of good-nature and good-breeding will assist and help him out, instead of laughing at him, and then a very little usage of the world, and an attentive observation, will soon give him a proper knowledge of it. It is the characteristic of low and bad company, which commonly consists of wags and witlings, to laugh at, disconcert, and as they call it bamboozle a young fellow of ingenuous modesty. You will tell me perhaps that to do all this one must have a good share of vanity; I grant it, but the great point is, *ne quid nimis*, for I fear that Monsieur de la Rochefoucault's maxim is too true, *que la vertu n'iroit pas loin, si la vanité ne lui tenoit pas compagnie.* A man who despairs of pleasing will never please, a man who is sure that he shall always please, wherever he goes, is a coxcomb, but the man who hopes and endeavours to please, and believes that he may, will most infallibly please.

## EVIL MANNERISMS: AFFECTATIONS AND INSINUATIONS

My dear little Boy,

I know that you are generous and benevolent in your nature, but that, though the principal point is not quite enough, you must seem so too. I do not mean ostentatiously, but do not be ashamed, as many young fellows are of owning the laudable sentiments, of good-nature and humanity which you really feel. I have known many young men, who desired to be reckoned men of spirit, affect a hardness and an unfeelingness, which in reality they never had. Their conversation is in the decisive and minatory tone; they are for breaking bones, cutting off ears, throwing people out of the window, etc., and all these fine declarations, they ratify with horrible and silly oaths. All this to be thought men of spirit. Astonishing error this, which necessarily reduces them to this dilemma; if they really mean what they say, they are brutes, and if they do not, they are fools for saying it. This however is a common character amongst young men. Carefully avoid this contagion, and content yourself with being calmly and mildly resolute and steady, when you are thoroughly convinced that you are in the right, for this is true spirit. What is commonly called in the world, a man or a woman of spirit, are the two most detestable and most dangerous animals that inhabit it. They are

wrongheaded, captious, jealous, offended without reason, and offending with as little. The man of spirit has immediate recourse to his sword, and the woman of spirit to her tongue, and it is hard to say which of the two is the most mischievous weapon. It is too usual a thing, in many companies, to take the tone of scandal and defamation; some gratify their malice, and others think that they show their wit by it. But I hope that you will never adopt this tone. On the contrary, do you always take the favourable side of the question, and without an offensive and flat contradiction, seem to doubt, and represent the uncertainty of reports, where private malice is at least very apt to mingle itself. This candid and temperate behaviour will please the whole uncandid company, though a sort of gentle contradiction to their unfavourable insinuations; as it makes them hope that they may in their turns find an advocate in you. There is another kind of offensiveness often used in company, which is to throw out hints and insinuations, only applicable to and felt by one or two persons in the company, who are consequently both embarrassed and angry, and the more so, as they are the more unwilling to show that they apply these hints to themselves. Have a watch over yourself never to say anything that either the whole company, or any one person in it, can reasonably or probably take ill, and remember the French saying, *qu'il ne faut pas parler de corde, dans la maison d'un pendu.* Good-nature universally

charms, even all those who have none, and it is impossible to be *aimable* without both the reality and the appearances of it.

## EGOTISM AND VANITY

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

The *egotism* is the usual and favourite figure of most people's rhetoric, which I hope you will never adopt; but on the contrary most scrupulously avoid. Nothing is more disagreeable nor irksome to the company than to hear a man either praising or condemning himself; for both proceed from the same motive, vanity. I would allow no man to speak of himself, unless in a court of justice, in his own defence, or as a witness. Shall a man speak in his own praise, however justly? No. The hero of his own little tale, always puzzles and disgusts the company, who do not know what to say nor how to look. Shall he blame himself? No. Vanity is as much the motive of his self-condemnation, as of his own panegyric. I have known many people take shame to themselves, and with a modest contrition confess themselves guilty of most of the cardinal virtues. They have such a weakness in their nature, that they cannot help being too much moved with the misfortunes and miseries of their fellow creatures, which they feel; perhaps more but at least as much as they do their own. Their generosity they are sensible, is imprudence, for they are apt to

carry it too far, from the weak though irresistible beneficence of their nature. They are possibly too jealous of their honour, and too irascible whenever they think that it is touched, and this proceeds from their unhappy warm constitution which makes them too tender and sensible upon that point. And so on, of all the virtues possible. A poor trick, and a wretched instance of human vanity, that defeats its own purpose. Do you be sure never to speak of yourself, for yourself, nor against yourself ; but let your character speak for you.

Whatever that says, will be believed, but whatever you say of it, will not, and only make you odious or ridiculous. Be constantly upon your guard against the various snares and effects of vanity and self-love. It is impossible to extinguish them, they are without exception in every human breast, and in the present state of nature it is very right that they should be so, but endeavour to keep them within due bounds, which is very possible. In this case dissimulation is almost meritorious, and the seeming modesty of the hero or of the patriot adorns their other virtues; I use the word of *seeming*, for their *valets de chambre* know better. Vanity is the more odious and shocking to everybody, because everybody without exception has vanity; and two vanities can never love one another, any more than according to the vulgar saying, two of a trade can.

## SYSTEMATIC ATTENTION — THE SENSE OF THE FITNESS OF THINGS

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

I have more than once recommended to you, in the course of our correspondence, *attention*, but I shall frequently recur to that subject, which is as inexhaustible as it is important. Attend carefully in the first place to human nature in general, which is pretty much the same in all human creatures, and varies chiefly by modes, habits, education, and example. Analyse, and, if I may use the expression, anatomise it. Study your own, and that will lead you to know other people's. Carefully observe the words, the looks, and gestures of the whole company you are in, and retain all their little singularities, humours, tastes, antipathies, and affections; which will enable you to please or avoid them occasionally as your judgment may direct you. I will give you the most trifling instance of this that can be imagined, and yet will be sure to please. If you invite anybody to dinner, you should take care to provide those things which you have observed them to like more particularly, and not to have those things which you know they have an antipathy to. These trifling things go a great way in the art of pleasing, and the more so from being so trifling, that they are flattering proofs of your regard for the persons, even to *minucies*.

These things are what the French call *des attentions*, which (to do them justice) they study and practise more than any people in Europe. Attend to and look at whoever speaks to you, and never seem *distrait* or *rêveur*, as if you did not hear them at all, for nothing is more contemptuous, and consequently more shocking. It is true, you will by these means often be obliged to attend to things not worth anybody's attention, but it is a necessary sacrifice to be made to good manners in society. A minute attention is also necessary to time, place, and characters. A *bon mot* in one company, is not so in another, but on the contrary may prove offensive. Never joke with those whom you observe to be at that time pensive and grave; and on the other hand do not preach and moralise in a company full of mirth and gayety.

Many people come into company, full of what they intend to say in it themselves, without the least regard to others, and thus charged up to the muzzle, are resolved to let it off at any rate. I knew a man, who had a story about a gun, which he thought a good one and that he told it very well; he tried all means in the world to turn the conversation upon guns, but if he failed in his attempt, he started in his chair, and said he heard a gun fired, but when the company assured him that they heard no such thing, he answered, perhaps then I was mistaken, but however, since we are talking of guns, — and then told his story, to the great indignation of the company.

Become, as far as with innocence and honour you can, all things to all men, and you will gain a great many. Have *des prévenances* to, and say or do, what you judge beforehand will be most agreeable to them without their hinting at or expecting it. It would be endless to specify the numberless opportunities that every man has of pleasing if he will but make use of them. Your own good sense will suggest them to you, and your good-nature, and even your interest will induce you to practise them. Great attention is to be had to times and seasons, for example at meals, talk often but never long at a time; for the frivolous bustle of the servants, and often the more frivolous conversation of the guests, which chiefly turns upon kitchen-stuff and cellar-stuff, will not bear any long reasonings or relations. Meals are and were always reckoned the moments of relaxation of the mind, and sacred to easy mirth, and social cheerfulness. Conform to this custom, and furnish your quota of good-humour, but be not induced by example, to the frequent excess of gluttony or intemperance. The former inevitably produces dulness, the latter, madness.

Observe the *à propos* in everything you say or do. In conversing with those who are much your superiors, however easy and familiar you may and ought to be with them, preserve the respect that is due to them. Converse with your equals, with an easy familiarity and at the same time with great civility and decency. But too much familiarity, according to the old saying,

often breeds contempt, and sometimes quarrels; and I know nothing more difficult in common behaviour than to fix due bounds to familiarity; too little implies an unsociable formality, too much destroys all friendly and social intercourse. The best rule I can give you to manage familiarity, is never to be more familiar with anybody, than you would be willing, and even glad that he should be with you; on the other hand avoid that uncomfortable reserve and coldness, which is generally the shield of cunning, or the protection of dulness. The Italian maxim is a wise one, *Volto sciolto e pensieri stretti;* that is, let your countenance be open, and your thoughts be close.

To your inferiors, you should use a hearty benevolence in your words and actions, instead of a refined politeness, which would be apt to make them suspect that you rather laughed at them. For example, you must show civility to a mere country gentleman in a very different manner from what you do to a man of the world. Your reception of him should seem hearty, and rather coarse, to relieve him from the embarrassment of his own *mauvaise honte.* Have attention even in company of fools, for though they are fools, they may perhaps drop, or repeat something worth your knowing, and which you may profit by. Never talk your best in the company of fools, for they would not understand you, and would perhaps suspect that you jeered them, as they commonly call it, but talk only the plainest common sense to them, and very gravely,

for there is no jesting, nor *badinage* with them. Upon the whole, with attention, and *les attentions*, you will be sure to please, without them you will be as sure to offend.

## AFFECTATIONS OF MIND AND BODY — JUDGMENT AND DECORUM — ELEGANCE OF LANGUAGE IN CONVERSATION

My dear little Boy,

Carefully avoid all affectation either of mind or body. It is a very true and a very trite observation that no man is ridiculous for being what he really is, but for affecting to be what he is not. No man is awkward by nature, but by affecting to be genteel; and I have known many a man of common sense pass generally for a fool, because he affected a degree of wit that God had denied him. A ploughman is by no means awkward in the exercise of his trade, but would be exceedingly ridiculous, if he attempted the air and graces of a man of fashion. You learned to dance but it was not for the sake of dancing, but it was to bring your air and motions back to what they would naturally have been, if they had had fair play, and had not been warped in your youth by bad examples and awkward imitations of other boys. Nature may be cultivated and improved both as to the body and as to the mind, but it is not to be extinguished by art, and all endeavours

of that kind are absurd, and an inexhaustible fund for ridicule. Your body and mind must be at ease, to be agreeable; but affectation is a perpetual constraint, under which no man can be genteel in his carriage, or pleasing in his conversation. Do you think that your motions would be easy or graceful if you wore the clothes of another man much slenderer or taller than yourself? Certainly not; it is the same thing with the mind, if you affect a character that does not fit you, and that nature never intended for you.

But here do not mistake, and think that it follows from hence that you should exhibit your whole character to the public because it is your natural one. No. Many things must be suppressed, and many occasionally concealed in the best character. Never force nature, but it is by no means necessary to show it all. Here discretion must come to your assistance, that sure and safe guide through life; discretion that necessary companion to reason, and the useful *garde-fou*, if I may use that expression, to wit and imagination. Discretion points out the *à propos*, the *decorum*, the *ne quid nimis* and will carry a man of moderate parts farther, than the most shining parts would without it. It is another word for *judgment* though not quite synonymous to it. Judgment is not upon all occasions required, but discretion always is. Never affect nor assume a particular character, for it will never fit you but will probably give you a ridicule; but leave it to your conduct, your virtues, your morals and your

manners, to give you one. Discretion will teach you to have particular attention to your *mœurs* which we have no one word in our language to express exactly.

*Morals* are too much, manners too little, decency comes the nearest to it, though rather short of it. Cicero's word *decorum* is properly the thing, and I see no reason why that expressive word, should not be adopted, and naturalised in our language, I have never scrupled using it in that sense. *À propos* of words, study your own language more carefully than most English people do. Get a habit of speaking it with propriety and elegancy. For there are few things more disagreeable than to hear a gentleman talk the barbarisms, the solecisms, and the vulgarisms of porters. Avoid on the other hand, a stiff and formal accuracy, especially what the women call *hard words*, when plain ones as expressive are at hand. The French make it a study to *bien narrer*, and to say the truth they are apt to *narrer trop*, and with too affected an elegancy. The three commonest topics of conversation are religion, politics, and news. All people think that they understand the two first perfectly, though they never studied either, and are therefore very apt to talk of them both, dogmatically and ignorantly, consequently with warmth. But religion is by no means a proper subject for conversation in a mixed company. It should only be treated among a very few people of learning, for mutual instruction. It is too awful and respectable a subject to become a

familiar one. Therefore, never mingle yourself in it, any farther than to express a universal toleration and indulgence to all errors in it, if conscientiously entertained; for every man has as good a right to think as he does, as you have to think as you do, nay in truth he cannot help it. As for politics, they are still more universally understood, and as every one thinks his private interest more or less concerned in them, nobody hesitates to pronounce decisively upon them, not even the ladies; the copiousness of whose eloquence is more to be admired upon that subject, than the conclusiveness of their logic. It will be impossible for you to avoid engaging in these conversations, for there are hardly any others, but take care to do it very coolly and with great good-humour; and whenever you find that the company begins to be heated and noisy for the good of their country, be only a patient hearer, unless you can interpose by some agreeable *badinage* and restore good-humour to the company. And here I cannot help observing to you that nothing is more useful either to put off or to parry disagreeable and puzzling affairs, than a good-humoured and genteel *badinage*. I have found it so by long experience, but this *badinage* must not be carried to *mauvaise plaisanterie*. It must be light, without being frivolous, sensible without being in the least sententious, and in short have that pleasing *je ne sçay quoy*, which everybody feels, and nobody can describe.

## GIDDINESS AND INATTENTION — *HOC AGE* — AN IDLE STORY OF CÆSAR

BLACKHEATH, *October* 4, 1766.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

*Amoto quæramus seria ludo.* I have often trifled with you in my letters, and there is no harm in trifling sometimes. Dr. Swift used often to say, *vive la bagatelle*, but everything has its proper season and when I consider your age now, it is proper, I think, to be sometimes serious. You know that I love you mightily, and I find but one single fault with you. You are the best-natured boy, you have good parts, and an excellent memory; but now to your fault, which you may so easily correct, that I am astonished that your own good sense does not make you do it. It is your giddiness and inattention which you confessed to me.

You know that without a good stock of learning, you can never, when you are a man, be received in good company; and the only way to acquire that stock, is to apply with attention and diligence to whatever you are taught. The *hoc age* is of the utmost consequence in every part of life. No man can do or think of two things at a time, to any purpose, and whoever does two things at once, is sure to do them both ill. It is the characteristic of a futile frivolous man to be doing one thing and at the same time thinking of another. Do not imagine that I would have you plod and study

all day long; no, leave that to dull boys. On the contrary, I would have you divert yourself, and be as gay as ever you please; but while you are learning mind that only, and think of nothing else; it will be the sooner over. They tell an idle story of Julius Cæsar, that he dictated to six secretaries at once, and upon different businesses. This I am sure is as false as it is absurd, for Cæsar had too good sense to do any two things at once. I am sure that for the future you will attend diligently to whatever you are doing, and that for two reasons; the one is that your own good sense at eleven years old, will show you not only the utility, but the necessity of learning, the other is that if you love me, as I believe you do, you will cheerfully do what I so earnestly ask of you for your own sake only. When I see you next, which shall not be very long first, I flatter myself that the doctor will give me a very good account of your close attention. Good night.

To Master Stanhope at Dr. Dodd's House in Southampton Row, London.

## PRIDE OF RANK AND BIRTH

BATH, *November* 5, 1766.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

See how punctual I am; I told you that I would write to you first from hence; I arrived here but yesterday, and I write to-day. When I saw you last

Sunday, you assured me that you had a clear conscience, and I believe it, for I cannot suppose you could be guilty of so horrible a crime, as that of asserting an untruth. To say the truth I think you have but few faults, and as I perceive them, I shall make it my business to correct them, and assume the office of censor. If I mistake not I have discovered in that little heart some lurking seeds of pride which nature who has been very kind to you never sowed there, but were transplanted there by vulgar folly and adulation at Mansfield. You was there my young squire, and sometimes perhaps by anticipation my young lord. Well and what then? Do not you feel that you owe those advantages wholly to chance and not to any merit of your own? Are you better born, as silly people call it, than the servant who wipes your shoes? Not in the least, he had a father and a mother, and they had fathers and mothers, and grandfathers and grandmothers and so on, up to the first creation of the human species, and is consequently of as ancient a family as yourself.[1] It is true your family has been more lucky than his, but not one jot better. You will

[1] There is a story illustrative of this passage and characteristic of Lord Chesterfield's humour. A picture of a man and woman and two boys with the Stanhope Arms in the corner was given by some one to Lord Chesterfield, as an evidence of family antiquity. He accepted the gift and wrote under it, "Adam Stanhope of Eden Garden and Eve Stanhope his wife, with their two sons Cain Stanhope and Abel Stanhope." See Mrs. Carter's Letters from 1741 to 1770, i. 32.

find in Ulysses's speech for the armour of Achilles, this sensible observation. *Nam genus et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi, vix ea nostra voco.* Moreover you desire, and very laudably, to please, which if you have any pride is absolutely impossible, for there is not in nature so hateful and so ridiculous a character as that of a man who is proud of his birth and rank. All people hate and ridicule him, he is mimicked, and has nicknames given him, such as *the sovereign*, *the sublime*, *the stately*, etc. I allow you to be proud of superior merit and learning when you have them, but that is not the blamable and absurd pride of birth and rank that I mean, on the contrary it is a blameless and pardonable vanity, if not carried too far.

## SHINING THOUGHTS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN AUTHORS

*Saturday morning* [*January*, 1767].

My dear Boy,

I send you a book which I think must gratify your love of variety. It is a collection of the most shining thoughts both of the ancients and of the moderns, compiled by the famous Père Bouhours, a Jesuit, a man of great parts and sound judgment. I endeavour to stock your mind with the most ingenious thoughts of other people, in hopes that they may suggest to you materials for thinking yourself; for an honest man will no more live upon the credit of other people's thoughts, than of their fortune. When, therefore, you

dip into this book, and that any thought pleases you much, ask yourself why it pleases you, and examine whether it is founded upon truth and nature, for nothing else can please at long run. Tinsel false thoughts, may impose upon one for a short time, like false money, but sterling coin alone, will always, and everywhere pass current. God bless you and make you both an honest and an able man, but the former above all things.

## AVARICE AND AMBITION

*Monday morning* [*March*, 1767].

My dear Boy,

I was very glad to hear that in one of your late essays, you preferred ambition to avarice, and indeed there is hardly any comparison between them. Avarice is a mean, ignoble, and dirty passion; I never knew a miser that had any one great or good quality; but ambition, even where it is a vice, is at least the vice of a gentleman. Ambition according to its object is either blamable, or commendable. Tyrants and conquerors, who ravage and desolate the world, and trample upon all the rights of mankind to gratify their ambition, are doubtless the greatest and most dangerous of all criminals. But an ambition to excel others in all virtuous and laudable things is not only blameless, but highly meritorious, and should extend from the least, to the greatest objects. You may, and I hope have, that ambition in your little sphere. I

remember that when I was of your age, I had a strong ambition to excel all my contemporaries in whatever was praiseworthy. I laboured hard to outstrip them in learning, I was mortified if in our little plays, they seemed more dextrous than I was; nay I was uneasy if they danced, walked, or sat, more genteelly than myself. Those little things are by no means to be neglected, for they are of more use in the common intercourse of life, than you imagine them to be, especially in your profession, which is speaking in public. I say in your *profession*, for you must excel in that, or you will be nobody. You guess, I am sure, that I mean speaking well, both in public assemblies, and in private conversation. Cicero speaks of eloquence, as the principal object of a laudable ambition, and asserts it to be the chief distinction between man and beast.[1] *Quam ob rem quis hoc non jure miretur, summéque in eo elaborandum esse arbitretur, ut, quo uno homines maxime bestiis praestent, in hoc hominibus ipsis antecellat.* This is one kind of ambition whose object is pleasure, and public utility, and consequently meritorious. Oh! what exquisite joy must it give an honest man (you see I endeavour to imitate your florid eloquence) to see multitudes hang upon his tongue, and persuaded to adopt his opinion, instead of their own, if they had any, for very often they have none, and if they have, it is probably an erroneous one. I send you herewith an excellent

[1] Cic. *de Orat.* I. viii.

collection of Cicero's thoughts upon various subjects, the Latin on one side, and the French translation by L'Abbé d'Olivet on the other, which French translation will enable you to understand the original Latin, better than can be expected at your age. I have marked what he says upon eloquence, read it with attention. God bless my boy.

To MASTER STANHOPE.

Omnium Puerorum facile Principi, et Clarissimo Histrioni, etc.

## THE ENDEAVOUR TO ATTAIN PERFECTION — THE INFLUENCE OF SPORTING TASTES

BATH, *November* 17, 1767.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Your last letter was so good a one, that had it not been for Dr. Dodd's attestation that it was all your own, I should have thought it a translation of one of Cicero's, or Pliny's, those two acknowledged standards of epistolary perfection. However go on, and strive to attain to absolute perfection, in writing, as in everything else that you do; for though absolute perfection is denied to human nature, those who take the most pains to arrive at it, will come the nearest to it. The famous disturber and scourge of mankind, Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, in his low camp style used to say that by resolution and perseverance a man might do everything. . . . I own I cannot entirely agree with his Swedish Majesty; but so much

I will venture to say, that every man may, by unremitting application and endeavours, do much more, than at the first setting out, he thought it possible that he ever could do. Learn to distinguish between difficulties and impossibilities, which many people do not. The silly and the sanguine look upon impossibilities to be only difficulties, as on the other hand, the lazy and the timorous take every difficulty for an impossibility. A greater knowledge of the world, will teach you the proper medium between those two extremes. I approve greatly of your father's method of shooting his game with his pen only, and heartily wish that when you have game of your own you may use no other. For my part I never in my life killed my own meat, but left it to the poulterer and butcher to do it for me. All those country sports as they are called, are the effects of the ignorance and idleness of country esquires, who do not know what to do with their time, but people of sense and knowledge never give in to those illiberal amusements. You make me fair promises in your letter of what you will do; but remember that at the same time, you give me great claims upon you, for I look upon your promises to be engagements upon the word and honour of a gentleman, which I hope you will never violate upon this or any other occasion. I have long ago and often repeated to you *qu'un homme d'honneur n'a que sa parole.* God bless you.

My compliments to your whole house.

## ON GOOD-BREEDING AND THE TREATMENT OF INFERIORS.

BLACKHEATH, *Tuesday*.

MY DEAR BOY,

You behaved yourself last Saturday very much like a gentleman, and better than any boy in England of your age would or could have done. Go on so, and when you are a man you will be, with more acquaintance with the world and good company, what I most earnestly wish you to be, the best bred, and consequently the best liked gentleman in England. Good-breeding, and a certain *suavitas morum*, shines and charms in every situation of life, with relation to all sorts and ranks of people, as well the lowest as the highest. There is a degree of good-breeding towards those who are greatly your inferiors, which is in truth, common humanity and good-nature; and yet I have known some persons who in other respects were well-bred, brutal to their servants and dependants. This is mean and implies a hardness of heart, and is what I am sure you never will be guilty of. When you use the imperative mood to your servants or dependants, who are your equals by nature (and only your inferiors by the malice of their fortune) you will add some softening word, such as *pray do so and so*, or *I wish you would do so*. You cannot conceive how much that *suavity* of manners will endear you to everybody,

even to those who have it not themselves. In high life there are a thousand *minucies* of good-breeding, which though *minucies* in themselves, are so necessary and agreeable, as to deserve your utmost attention and imitation. As for instance what the French call, *le bon ton* or *le ton de la bonne compagnie*, by which is meant the fashionable tone of good company. This consists of many trifling articles in themselves, which when cast up and added together, make a total of infinite consequence.

Observe and adopt all those little graces and modes of the best company. Suppose two men of equal abilities employed in the same business, but one of them perfectly well-bred and engaging, and the other with only the common run of civility, the former will certainly succeed much better and sooner than the latter. I am sure you are convinced that Dr. Dodd and I love you, and I really believe that you love us; what then is the natural inference, which your own good sense must draw from these premises? Why, that we are more capable of advising you well, than you can be at your age, of conducting yourself. *Ergo*, to chop logic a little, you will follow our advice. Do so my dear boy, for three or four years more only, and then go alone, and may God bless you.

## THE FALSE PRIDE OF RANK

BLACKHEATH, *July* 16, 1768.

I dare say you know and perhaps too well that in time probably you will have a title and a good estate, but I dare say you know too that you will owe them merely to chance, and not to any merit of your own, be your merit never so great. Whenever you come to the possession of them, there will be people enow mean and absurd enough to flatter you upon them. Be upon your guard against such wretches, and be assured that they must think you a fool, and that they have private views to gratify by such impudent adulation. The most absurd character that I know of in the world, and the finest food for satire and ridicule, is a sublime and stately man of quality, who without one grain of any merit, struts pompously in all the dignity of an ancient descent *from a long restive race of droning kings*, or more probably derived to him from fool to fool. I could name many men of great quality and fortune, who would pass through the world quietly, unknown and unlaughed at, were it not for those accidental advantages upon which they value themselves, and treat their inferiors, as they call them, with arrogance and contempt. But I never knew a man of quality and fortune, respected upon those accounts, unless he was humble with his title, and extensively generous and beneficent with his fortune.

*My Lord* is become a ridiculous nickname for those proud fools; *see My Lord comes;* there's *My Lord;* that is in other words, *see the puppy, there is the blockhead.* I am sure you would by all means avoid ridicule, for it sticks longer even than an injury, and to avoid it, wear your title as if you had it not; but for your estate, let distress and want, even without merit feel that you have one. I remember four fine lines of Voltaire upon this subject: —

> Répandez vos bienfaits avec magnificence,
> Même aux moins vertueux ne les refusez pas;
> Ne vous informez pas de leur reconnoissance,
> Il est grand, il est beau, de faire des ingrats.

By these virtues you may dignify your title, when you have one, but remember that your title without them can never dignify you. Nothing is more common than pride without dignity. A man of sense and virtue will always have dignity; but a fool if shuffled by chance into great rank and fortune, will be proud of both. There is as much difference between pride and dignity, as there is between power and authority. Power may fall to the share of a Nero or a Caligula, but authority can only be the attendant of the confidence mankind have in your sense and virtue. Aristides and Cato had authority.

## THE STRICT VERACITY OF A GENTLEMAN

BLACKHEATH, *July* 30, 1768.

MY DEAR BOY,

My two objects in your education are and always have been to give you learning enough to distinguish yourself in Parliament, and manners to shine in courts. The former is in the best hands, Dr. Dodd's; but the latter department I shall undertake myself, from my long experience and knowledge of the ways of the world. I am sure you would be a gentleman, and I am as sure that I would by all means have you one. *A gentleman* is a complex term, answers exactly to the French word *honnête homme*, and comprehends manners, decorum, politeness, but above all strict veracity; for without that all the accomplishments in the world avail nothing. A man who is once detected in a lie, and every liar is sooner or later detected, is irrecoverably sunk into infamy. Nobody will believe him afterwards even upon his oath. To tell a man that he lies is the greatest affront that can be offered him, and according to the mad but indispensable custom of the world, can only be washed off by blood. If a man gives another the lie though ever so justly, what must the liar do? He must fight him, and so justify one crime by (if possible) a greater; a chance of murdering or of being murdered, and this is what every one who deviates from truth, is sooner or later exposed to.

Besides all this there is a moral turpitude in a lie which no palliatives can excuse, and a plain proof of the infamy of this practice is, that no man, not even the worst man living will own himself a liar, though many will own as great crimes. Some people excuse themselves to themselves, by only adding to and embellishing truth in their narrations, but falsehood never can be innocent, for it can only be intended to mislead and deceive. But I am sure I have dwelt too long upon this subject to you, who I am persuaded have a just horror for a lie of any kind, or else I should have a horror for you.

I have often recommended to you the good-breeding and the manners of a gentleman, and to my great comfort, not without success, for you are in general civil and well-bred; the article in which you fail the most is at meals. You eat with too much avidity, and cram your mouth so full, that if you were to speak you must sputter the contents of it amongst the dishes and the company. You sometimes eat off of your knife, which is never to be done, and sometimes you play with your knife, fork, or spoon, too like a boy. These are but little faults, I confess, but however, are better corrected than persevered in. In the main it goes very well and I love you mightily. God bless you.

## ON THE *JE NE SÇAY QUOY*

BLACKHEATH, *August* 9, 1768.

MY DEAR BOY

I dare say you have heard and read of the *je ne sçay quoy*, both in French and English, for the expression is now adopted into our language; but I question whether you have any clear idea of it, and indeed it is more easily felt than defined. It is a most inestimable quality, and adorns every other. I will endeavour to give you a general notion of it, though I cannot an exact one; experience must teach it you, and will, if you attend to it. It is in my opinion a compound of all the agreeable qualities of body and mind, in which no one of them predominates in such a manner as to give exclusion to any other. It is not mere wit, mere beauty, mere learning, nor indeed mere any one thing that produces it, though they all contribute something towards it. It is owing to this *je ne sçay quoy* that one takes a liking to some one particular person at first rather than to another. One feels oneself prepossessed in favour of that person without being enough acquainted with him to judge of his intrinsic merit or talents, and one finds oneself inclined to suppose him to have good sense, good-nature, and good-humour. A genteel address, graceful motions, a pleasing elocution, and elegancy of style, are powerful ingredients in this compound. It

is in short an extract of all the *Graces*. Here you will perhaps ask me to define the Graces, which I can only do by the *je ne sçay quoy*, as I can only define the *je ne sçay quoy* by the Graces. No one person possesses them all, but happy he who possesses the most, and wretched he who possesses none of them. I can much more easily describe what their contraries are. As, for example, a head sunk in between the shoulders, feet turned inwards instead of outwards, the manner of walking or rather waddling of a mackaw, so as to make Mrs. Dodd very justly call you her *mackaw*. All these sort of things are most notorious insults upon the Graces and indeed upon all good company. Do not take into your head that these things are trifles; though they may seem so if singly and separately considered, yet when considered aggregately and relatively to the great and necessary art of pleasing, they are of infinite consequence. Socrates, the wisest and honestest pagan that ever lived, thought the Graces of such vast importance that he always advised his disciples to *sacrifice to them*. From so great an authority, I will most earnestly recommend to you to sacrifice to them. Invite, entreat, supplicate them to accompany you, in all you say or do; and sacrifice to them every little idle humour and laziness. They will then be propitious and accept, and reward your offerings. The principal object of my few remaining years, is to make you perfect, if human nature could be so, and it would

make me happy if you would give me reason to say in time of you, what Lucretius says of Memmius: —

> Quem tu Dea tempore in omni,
> Omnibus ornatum voluisti excellere rebus.

Turn out your right foot, raise your head above your shoulders, walk like a gentleman, if not, I know not what Mrs. Dodd intends to do to you. God bless thee.

## THE INDECENT OSTENTATION OF VICES

BLACKHEATH, *September* 3, 1768.

MY DEAR BOY,

You are now near that age, in which imitation is not only natural, but in some degree necessary. You are too young to be able to form yourself, and yet you are of an age when you should begin to be forming. Your greatest difficulty will be to choose good models to work from, and I am sorry to tell you that there are at least twenty very bad ones to one good one, especially amongst the youth of the present times. Their manners are illiberal and even their vices are degraded by their indecent ostentation of them. When you come more into the world, be very cautious what model you choose, or rather choose no one singly; but pick and cull the accomplishments of many, as Apelles or Praxiteles, I have forgot which, did to form his celebrated Venus; not from any one beauty, but by singling out and uniting the best features of a great

many. When you hear of any young man, of an universal good character, observe him attentively, and in great measure imitate him; I say in a great measure, for no man living is so perfect as to deserve imitation in every particular. When you hear of another whose good-breeding and address are generally applauded, form yourself upon his model in those particulars. Ill examples are sometimes useful, to deter from the vices that characterise them. Horace tells us that his father trained him up to virtue, by pointing out to him the turpitude of the vices of several individuals. When you hear any young man, of what rank soever, swearing, cursing, talking obscenely, and even boasting of the vices he ought to be ashamed of, put him down for a fool; *longe fuge*, for he has *fœnum in cornu*. Have no communication with such contemptible wretches. They will soil and dirty your character if you ever rub against them. But I think you have too much good sense to be infected by the contagion of such examples, for it is certain that all vices, and impropriety of conduct, proceed from a want of true good sense. God bless you.

## THE ART OF LETTER-WRITING

BLACKHEATH, *September* 15, 1768.

MY DEAR BOY,

I send you enclosed a letter from your friend young Mr. Chenevix, which you should answer in about a

month. Politeness is as much concerned in answering letters within a reasonable time, as it is in returning a bow, immediately. *À propos* of letters, let us consider the various kinds of letters, and the general rules concerning them. Letters of business must be answered immediately, and are the easiest either to write or to answer, for the subject is ready and only requires great clearness and perspicuity in the treating. There must be no prettinesses, no quaintnesses, no antitheses, nor even wit. *Non est his locus.* The letters that are the hardest to write, are those that are upon no subject at all, and which are like *small talk* in conversation. They admit of wit if you have any, and of agreeable trifling or *badinage.* For as they are nothing in themselves, their whole merit turns upon their ornaments; but they should seem easy and natural, and not smell of the lamp, as most of the letters I have seen printed do, and probably because they were wrote, in the intention of printing them. Letters between real intimate friends are of course frequent, but then they require no care nor trouble, for there the heart leaves the understanding little or nothing to do. Matter and expression present themselves. There are two other sorts of letters, but both pretty much of the same nature. These are letters to great men your superiors, and *lettres galantes,* I do not mean love letters, to fine women. Put flattery enough in them both, and they will be sure to please. I can assure you that men, especially great men, are not in the

least behindhand with women in their love of flattery. Whenever you write to persons greatly your inferiors, and by way of giving orders, let your letters speak, what I hope in God, you will always feel, the utmost gentleness and humanity. If you happen to write to your *valet de chambre*, or your bailiff, it is no great trouble to say *Pray do such a thing*, it will be taken kindly, and your orders will be the better executed for it. What good heart would roughly exert the power and superiority, which chance more than merit has given him over many of his fellow creatures? I pray God to bless you, but remember at the same time, that probably He will only bless you in proportion to your deserts.

## GOOD-HUMOUR AND GOOD-NATURE —"*EX PEDE HERCULEM*" AND "*PEDARII SENATORES*"

BATH, *November* 27, 1768.

MY DEAR BOY,

Your letter which I received yesterday was so pretty a one that I hope you kept a copy of it to show to Dr. Dodd, who I dare say will be extremely pleased with it. I have upon my word, a greater regard for your decisions than for the decrees of the Pope's and œcumenical counsels. I shall therefore from time to time apply to you for your opinion, where I have any doubts myself. As for instance pray tell me where is

the difference between good-nature and good-humour. They seem to have some resemblance to each other, and yet not to be convertible terms. Can an ill-natured man be good-humoured, or a good-humoured man be ill-natured? I am not clear in that point, and wait for your opinion. I return my compliments to your right foot, and congratulate it upon having taken a righter turn of late. Mr. Desnoyers is the priest of the Graces, who will offer them your sacrifices, and make them propitious to you. The foot is a more material part than perhaps you are aware of, for you know that Hercules was known by his foot, *ex pede Herculem;* which I presume was a very large one, though none of the *veteres codices* mention whether he turned it inwards or outwards. It is in ancient history an *hiatus valde deflendus.* Physicians observe that there is a mutual and quick communication between the head and the feet, so that who knows but that a wrong turn in the foot, may produce a wrong turn in the head, which would be a *capital* misfortune. In the Roman Senate there were many senators, who were only known by their feet, and for that reason called *pedarii senatores,* for they never spoke, and only manifested their opinions by walking on one side or the other of the senate house. Many such are stirring at this day. I will only add upon this subject, that in either politics or love, it is reckoned a great point gained, to have got *the length of the party's foot.* Having thus proved to you by serious and solid arguments the great

importance of that basis of the human structure the foot; I recommend yours to your attention, and Monsieur Desnoyer's care, and so heartily bid you farewell till the next time.

## ON THE TREATMENT OF INFERIORS

BLACKHEATH, *August* 29, 1769.

MY DEAR BOY,

It gave me great pleasure to observe the indignation which you expressed at the brutality of the Pacha, you lately dined with, to his servant, which I am sure you are and ever will be incapable of. Those Pachas seem to think that their servants and themselves are not made of the same clay, but that God has made by much the greatest part of mankind to be the oppressed and abused slaves of the superior ranks. Service is a mutual contract, the master hires and pays his servant, the servant is to do his master's business; but each is equally at liberty to be off of the engagement, upon due warning. Servants are full as necessary to their masters, as their masters are to them, and so in truth is the whole human species to each other; God has connected them by reciprocal wants and conveniencies, which must, or at least ought to create that sentiment of universal benevolence or good-will which is called *humanity*. Consider were you the only living creature upon this globe, what a wretched miserable being you must be. Where would you get food or

clothes? You are full as much obliged to the ploughman for your bread, as the ploughman is to you for his wages. In this state then of mutual and universal dependence, what a monster of brutality and injustice must that man be; who, though of the highest rank, can treat his fellow creatures even of the lowest, with insult and cruelty, as if they were of a different and inferior species. But this exhortation is not necessary to you, for I thank God he has given you a good and tender heart, but I would have your benevolence proceed equally, from a sense of your duty both to God and man, as from the compassionate sentiments and feelings of your heart. Say often to yourself, *Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto.* I will encroach no longer upon Dr. Dodd's province, who can and will explain the whole duty of man to you, much better than I can, so God bless you my dear boy.

## PRIDE OF RANK AND BIRTH

BLACKHEATH, *September* 12, 1769.

MY DEAR BOY,

After my death, Sir William's, and your father's you will be in a situation that would make a fool proud and insolent, and a wise man more humble and obliging. I therefore easily judge of the effect, which it will have upon you. You will have a pretty good estate, and a pretty ancient title. I allow you to be

glad of both, but I charge you to be proud of neither of those merely fortuitous advantages, the attendants of your birth, not the rewards of any merit of yours. Your title will enable you to serve your country, your estate to serve your friends, and to realise your present benevolence of heart into beneficence to your fellow creatures. The rabble, that is at least three parts in four of mankind, admire riches and titles so much, that they envy and consequently hate the possessors of them; but if (which too seldom happens) those riches are attended by an extensive beneficence, and the titles by an easy affability, the possessors will then be adored. Take your choice, I am sure you will not hesitate. There is not in my mind a finer subject for ridicule, than a man who is proud of his birth, and jealous of his rank; his civility is an insolent protection, his walk is stately and processional, and he calls his inferiors only *fellows*. I remember a silly lord of this kind who one day when the House was up, came to the door in Palace Yard, and finding none of his servants there, asked the people who stood at the door, where are my fellows; upon which one of them answered him, your lordship has no fellow in the world. All silly men are not proud, but I aver that all proud men are silly without exception. Vanity is not always pride, but pride is always a foolish ill-grounded vanity. Vanity that arises from a consciousness of virtue and knowledge is a very pardonable vanity, but then even that vanity should be prudently concealed.

Upon the whole, the greater your rank, the greater your fortune may be, the more affability, complaisance, and beneficence will be expected from you, if you would not be hated, or ridiculous. But I need not I am sure have treated this subject, for your own good sense and good heart, would have suggested to you all I have said, and more. God bless you.

## THE RULES OF POLITE CONVERSATION —THE PERSISTENT STORY-TELLER

BATH, *October* 15, 1769.

MY DEAR BOY,

I received your letter with the enclosed translation from Abbé Trublet. It is very well translated except a very few and immaterial inaccuracies, but like Horace *ubi plura nitent non ego paucis offendar maculis.* The abbé has treated the affair of conversation very judiciously and truly, and it is a subject that very well deserves your utmost attention, it occurs every day, and all the day, and men are and will be judged of according to the part they act in conversation: it is to little purpose to know the rules, if one does not pay the utmost attention to them. Time, place, characters, and propriety are strictly to be observed. Many people come into company, full of what they intend to say themselves, and resolved to let it off properly or improperly no matter. This is particularly the case of narrators or story-tellers, who, fond of some

stories which they think good ones, and that they tell well, will torture the conversation in order to introduce their story. Next to long and tedious story-tellers, absent people, *les distraits*, are the most provoking and shocking, their inattention is an insult to the whole company. Be upon your guard always against that; observe every word that is said, and even every look; no absence; *point de distraction.*

## THE LAST OF THE LETTERS — THE TRAINING COMPLETED. — THE SNARES AND DANGERS OF LIFE.

*Tuesday, June* 19 [1770].[1]

MY DEAR BOY,

From the time I took you under my care, I loved you, because I thought that I saw in you a good and benevolent heart. I then wished that your parts might be as good, and they have proved so; they have not only answered my hopes, but my most sanguine wishes; I esteem, I admire you, and you are esteemed and admired by others, in your now little sphere. But the more I love you now the more I dread the snares and dangers that await you the next six or seven years of your life from ill company and bad examples. Should you be corrupted by them

[1] This is the last of the letters; and Tuesday, June 19, as determined by the chronological tables, indicates the year 1770. It is a fitting close to the series.

what a fall would that be! You would *fall like setting stars to rise no more.* When you see young fellows, whatever may be their rank, swearing and cursing as senselessly as wickedly, . . . drunk and engaged in scrapes, and quarrels, shun them, *fœnum habent in cornu, longe fuge.* You can only get disgrace and misfortunes by frequenting them. Do not think that these exhortations are the formal preachings of a formal old fellow; on the contrary, they are the best proofs I can give you of my tenderness. I would have you lead a youth of pleasures; but then for your sake, I would have them elegant pleasures becoming a man of sense and a gentleman; they will never sully nor disgrace your character. Keep the best company both of men and women, and make yourself an interesting figure in it. Have no *mauvaise honte,* which always keeps a man out of good company and sinks him into low and bad company. I really believe that these exhortations, and dehortations are unnecessary to your good sense; but, however, the danger is so great from the examples of the youth of the present times, that I shall frequently return to the charge, with my preventives. Mithridates (I think it was) had used himself so much to antidotes, that he could not bring it about when he wished to poison himself. What would I not give for such an antidote to administer to you? God bless you my dear boy. Whenever you want my coach draw a bill upon me for the same.

## LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTER TO HIS GODSON AND HEIR (TO BE DELIVERED AFTER HIS OWN DEATH)

MY DEAR BOY,

You will have received by my will solid proofs of my esteem and affection. This paper is not a will, and only conveys to you my most earnest requests, for your good alone, which requests, from your gratitude for my past care, from your good heart, and your good sense, I persuade myself, you will observe as punctually as if you were obliged by law to do so. They are not the dictates of a peevish, sour old fellow, who affects to give good rules, when he can no longer give bad examples; but the advice of an indulgent and tender friend (I had almost said parent), and the result of the long experience of one, *hackneyed in the ways of life*, and calculated only to assist and guide your unexperienced youth.

You will probably come to my title and estate too soon, and at an age at which you will be much less fit to conduct yourself with discretion than you were at ten years old. This I know is a very unwelcome truth to a sprightly young fellow, and will hardly be believed by him; but it is nevertheless a truth, and a truth which I most sincerely wish, though I cannot reasonably hope, that you may be firmly convinced of. At that critical period of life, the dangerous passions are busy, impetuous, and stifle all reflection, the

spirits high, and examples in general bad. It is a state of continual ebriety for six or seven years at least, and frequently attended by fatal and permanent consequences, both to body and mind. Believe yourself then to be drunk; and as drunken men, when reeling, catch hold of the next thing in their way to support them, do you, my dear boy, hold by the rails of my experience. I hope they will hinder you from falling, though perhaps not from staggering a little sometimes.

As to your religious and moral obligations I shall say nothing, because I know that you are thoroughly informed of them, and hope that you will scrupulously observe them, for if you do not you can neither be happy here nor hereafter.

I suppose you of the age of one-and-twenty, and just returned from your travels much fuller of fire than reflection; the first impressions you give of yourself, at your first entrance upon the great stage of life in your own country, are of infinite consequence, and to a great degree decisive of your future character. You will be tried first by the grand jury of Middlesex, and if they find a bill against you, you must not expect a very favourable verdict from the many petty juries who will try you again in Westminster.

Do not set up a tawdry, flaunting equipage, nor affect a grave one: let it be the equipage of a sensible young fellow, and not the gaudy one of a thoughtless young heir; a frivolous *éclat* and profusion will

lower you in the opinion of the sober and sensible part of mankind. Never wear over-fine clothes; be as fine as your age and rank require, but do not distinguish yourself by any uncommon magnificence or singularity of dress. Follow the example of Martin, and equally avoid that of Peter or Jack.[1] Do not think of shining by any one trifling circumstance, but shine in the aggregate, by the union of great and good qualities, joined to the amiable accomplishments of manners, air, and address.

At your first appearance in town, make as many acquaintances as you please, and the more the better; but for some time contract no friendships. Stay a little and inform yourself of the characters of those young fellows with whom you must necessarily live more or less, but connect yourself intimately with none but such whose moral characters are unblemished. For it is a true saying *tell me who you live with and I will tell you what you are;* and it is equally true that when a man of sense makes a friend of a knave or a fool, he must have something bad to do, or to conceal. A good character will be soiled at least by frequent contact with a bad one.

Do not be seduced by the fashionable word *spirit.* A man of spirit in the usual acceptation of that word is, in truth, a creature of strong and warm animal life with a weak understanding; passionate, wrong-headed, captious, jealous of his mistaken honour, and suspecting

[1] In Swift's *Tale of a Tub.*

unintended affronts, and, which is worse, willing to fight in support of his wrong head. Shun this kind of company, and content yourself with a cold, steady firmness and resolution. By the way, a woman of spirit is, *mutatis mutandis*, the duplicate of this man of spirit; a scold and a vixen.

I shall say little to you against gaming, for my example cries aloud to you *do not game*. Gaming is rather a rage than a passion; it will break in upon all your rational pleasures, and perhaps with some stain upon your character, if you should happen to win; for whoever plays deep must necessarily lose his money or his character. I have lost great sums at play, and am sorry I lost them, but I should now be much more sorry if I had won as much. As it is, I can only be accused of folly, to which I plead guilty. But, as in the common intercourse of the world you will often be obliged to play at social games, observe strictly this rule. Never sit down to play with men only, but let there always be a woman or two of the party, and then the loss or the gain cannot be considerable.

Do not be in haste to marry, but look about you first, for the affair is important. There are but two objects in marriage, love or money. If you marry for love, you will certainly have some very happy days, and probably many very uneasy ones; if for money, you will have no happy days and probably no uneasy ones; in this latter case let the woman at least be

such a one that you can live decently and amicably with, otherwise it is a robbery; in either case, let her be of an unblemished and unsuspected character, and of a rank not indecently below your own.

You will doubtless soon after your return to England be a member of one of the two houses of Parliament; there you must take pains to distinguish yourself as a speaker. The task is not very hard if you have common sense, as I think you have, and a great deal more. The *pedarii senatores*, who were known only by their feet, and not by their heads, were always the objects of general contempt. If on your first, second, or third attempt to speak, you should fail, or even stop short, from that trepidation and concern which every modest man feels upon those occasions, do not be discouraged, but persevere; it will do at last. Where there is a certain fund of parts and knowledge, speaking is but a knack, which cannot fail of being acquired by frequent use. I must however add this caution, never write down your speeches beforehand; if you do you may perhaps be a good declaimer, but will never be a debater. Prepare and digest your matter well in your own thoughts, and *verba non invita sequentur*. But if you can properly introduce into your speech a shining declamatory period or two which the audience may carry home with them, like the favourite song of an opera, it will have a good effect. The late Lord Bolingbroke had accustomed himself so much to a florid eloquence

even in his common conversation (which anybody with care may do) that his real *extempore* speeches seemed to be studied. Lord Mansfield was, in my opinion, the next to him in undeviating eloquence, but Mr. Pitt carried with him, unpremeditated, the strength of thunder, and the splendour of lightning. The best matter in the world, if ill-dressed and ungracefully spoken, can never please. Conviction or conversion are equally out of the question in both houses, but he will come the nearest to them who pleases the most. In that, as in everything else, sacrifice to the Graces. Be very modest in your *exordium*, and as strong as you can be in your *peroratio*.

I can hardly bring myself to caution you against drinking, because I am persuaded that I am writing to a rational creature, a gentleman, and not to a swine. However, that you may not be insensibly drawn into that beastly custom of even sober drinking and sipping, as the sots call it, I advise you to be of no club whatsoever. The object of all clubs is either drinking or gaming, but commonly both. A sitting member of a drinking club is not indeed always drunk, perhaps seldom quite so, but he is certainly never quite sober, and is *beclareted* next morning with the guzzle of the preceding evening. A member of a gaming club should be a cheat or he will soon be a beggar.

You will and ought to be in some employment at Court. It is the best school for manners, and whatever ignorant people may think or say of it, no more

the seat of vice than a village is; human nature is the same everywhere, the modes only are different. In the village they are coarse; in the court they are polite; like the different clothes in the two several places, frieze in the one, and velvet in the other.

Be neither a servile courtier nor a noisy patriot; custom, that governs the world instead of reason, authorises a certain latitude in political matters not always consistent with the strictest morality, but in all events remember *servare modum, finemque tueri.*

Be not only tender and jealous of your moral, but of your political, character. In your political welfare, you will necessarily make yourself enemies, but make them only your political and temporary, not personal, enemies. Pursue your own principles with steadiness, but without personal reflection or acrimony; and behave yourself to those who differ from you with all the politeness and good-humour of a gentleman, for in the frequent jumble of political atoms, the hostile and the amicable ones often change places.

In business be as able as you can, but do not be cunning; cunning is the dark sanctuary of incapacity. Every man can be cunning if he pleases, by simulation, dissimulation, and in short by lying. But that character is universally despised and detested, and justly too; no truly great man was ever cunning. Preserve a dignity of character by your virtue and veracity. You are by no means obliged to tell all that you know and think, but you are obliged, by all the most sacred ties

of morality and prudence, never to say anything contrary to what you know or think to be true. Be master of your countenance, and let not every fool who runs read it. One of the fundamental rules, and almost the only honest one of Italian politics, is *volto sciolto e pensieri stretti*, an open countenance and close thoughts.

Never be proud of your rank or birth, but be as proud as you please of your character. Nothing is so contrary to true dignity as the former kind of pride. You are, it is true, of a noble family, but whether of a very ancient one or not I neither know nor care, nor need you, and I dare say there are twenty fools in the House of Lords who could out-descend you in pedigree. That sort of stately pride is the standing jest of all people who can make one; but dignity of character is universally respected. Acquire and preserve that most carefully. Should you be unfortunate enough to have vices, you may, to a certain degree, even dignify them by a strict observance of decorum; at least they will lose something of their natural turpitude.

Carefully avoid every singularity that may give a handle to ridicule, for ridicule (with submission to Lord Shaftesbury), though not founded upon truth, will stick for some time, and if thrown by a skilful hand perhaps forever. Be wiser and better than your contemporaries, but seem to take the world as it is, and men as they are, for you are too young to be a *censor*

*morum;* you would be an object of ridicule. Act contrary to many churchmen; practise virtue, but do not preach it whilst you are young.

If you should ever fill a great station at court, take care above all things to keep your hands clean and pure from the infamous vice of corruption, a vice so infamous that it degrades even the other vices that may accompany it. Accept no present whatever; let your character in that respect be transparent and without the least speck, for as avarice is the vilest and dirtiest vice in private, corruption is so in public life. I call corruption the taking of a sixpence more than the just and known salary of your employment, under any pretence whatsoever. Use what power and credit you have at court, in the service of merit rather than of kindred, and not to get pensions and reversions for yourself or your family, for I call that also, what it really is, scandalous pollution, though of late it has been so frequent that it has almost lost its name.

Never run in debt, for it is neither honest nor prudent; but on the contrary, live so far within your annual income, as to leave yourself room sufficient for acts of generosity and charity. Give nobly to indigent merit, and do not refuse your charity even to those who have no merit but their misery. Such expense will do you more honour, and give you more pleasure, than the idle profusion of a modish and *erudite* luxury.

These few sheets will be delivered to you by Dr. Dodd at your return from your travels; probably long

after I shall be dead; read them with deliberation and reflection, as the tender and last testimonies of my affection for you. They are not the severe and discouraging dictates of an old parent, but the friendly and practicable advice of a sincere friend, who remembers that he has been young himself and knows the indulgence that is due to youth and inexperience. Yes, I have been young, and a great deal too young. Idle dissipation and innumerable indiscretions, which I am now heartily ashamed and repent of, characterised my youth. But if my advice can make you wiser and better than I was at your age, I hope it may be some little atonement. God bless you.

CHESTERFIELD.

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